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International Court of Justice

Warnings and Predictions

VISCOUNT ROTHERMERE

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WARNINGS & PREDICTIONS

THE INNER HISTORY

(including many letters never before published)

OF ENGLAND'S DANGER

and

Mr. Chamberlain's Fight for Security

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INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL
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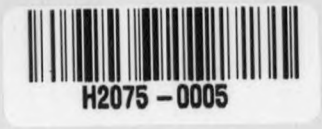
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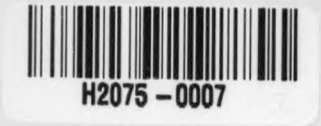
WARNINGS AND PREDICTIONS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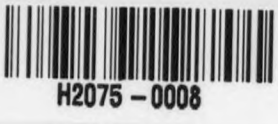
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VISCOUNT ROTHERMERE

WARNINGS
and
PREDICTIONS

MCMXXXIX
EYRE AND SPOTTISWOODE
LONDON

First impression March 1939
Second impression March 1939

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I DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO

ALL THOSE WHO BELIEVE WITH ME THAT BRITAIN

GOVERNED BY REALISM AND NOT BY SENTIMENTALISM

HAS A FUTURE STILL MORE GLORIOUS THAN

HER GLORIOUS PAST

R.

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FOREWORD

I HAVE called this book *Warnings and Predictions*, but it is more than a retrospect of the various pronouncements on international and national affairs from which its title is taken.

For some years past I have been obsessed by the twin perils in which Great Britain and the Empire have stood and still stand. In the span of one lifetime I have seen Britain reduced from an undisputed dominance of the world to a position in which her diplomatic wishes are largely ignored, often contemptuously, and her security challenged. That drastic change will seem to history the responsibility of those in whose charge our national fortunes were placed during the period of transition from acknowledged power to palpable impotence.

There is no help in bewailing past errors and missed opportunities. There may be help in surveying such errors and chances as guides to future conduct. There is no political satisfaction in any merely vindictive impeachment of those responsible for past errors. There may be political value in an examination of their conduct in an endeavour to discover to what extent they were the victims of a system which, if retained unamended, may lead us to still more deadly disaster.

It is inevitable that a survey of this kind should seem egotistical. It is not, however, from any empty egotism

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that I recall and record certain previous utterances which I have made on public affairs. There are two motives for so doing: to demonstrate that it was possible *at the time* to detect the significance of certain events which was not detected by those in political power in this country, and to emphasise that only by the most Spartan self-sacrifice and endurance on the part of the British peoples can the past failure of our statesmen to assess properly those events be redeemed.

It is not the habit of Britons to wear their hearts on their sleeves, but in the foreword to such a book as this I may be permitted to say that I assume that every one of my readers shares with me one main purpose and hope in political life. It is that the British race may be maintained in security and prosperity to develop that civilisation and mode of life which it has evolved through centuries of effort and which is now in jeopardy.

ROTHERMERE.

1939.

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CHAPTER ONE

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CHAPTER ONE

In the afternoon of January 31st 1933 the evening papers of London were displaying the news that Herr Adolf Hitler had become Chancellor of the German Reich.

George Ward Price happened to come into my room. I said to him:—

"Ward Price, I want you particularly to remember what I am about to say. This will prove to be one of the most historic days, if not *the* most historic day, in the latter day history of Europe."

It is perhaps difficult, six years afterwards, for most people to recall just how Herr Hitler was at that time regarded. The popular organs of the Press delighted to depict him as a Charlie Chaplin of international affairs. Politicians were inclined to dismiss him as a clownish imitation of Signor Mussolini. He was despised and derided.

For nearly fifteen years the German people had suffered the odium of defeat and had endured successive waves of economic calamity. The leaders of the German Republic had become the mendicants of the Chancelleries of Europe, and as mendicants had been treated.

The new German Chancellor was a man of obscure origins. The Austrian house-painter who had been a

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battalion runner and a corporal in the German army had raised a standard of revolt in Munich, only to be cast into prison for his pains. It seemed to the unimaginative eyes of London and Paris that his appointment as Reich Chancellor was rather in the nature of a bad joke than an event in the serious history of Europe.

From that initial misconception of the significance of Hitler and Hitlerism sprang all the alarms and agonies that have filled the past six years. From that first error in judgement came what may yet prove for Britain a catastrophic change in international relations and status.

Such a misconception may have been understandable in those relatively ignorant of the trends and personalities of contemporary European life. It was neither excusable nor understandable in those whose prime business it was to make themselves acquainted with such trends and persons.

The Government of the day, in showing such ignorance, exposed the pitiably inefficient character of its Intelligence Service.

To one like myself, who had long studied and often visited European States, and who was acquainted with the history of the Continent, it was obvious that Hitler and those about him in 1933 represented a new force. They were a return to a type of statesmen common enough in the days of Frederick the Great and Napoleon Bonaparte, but unfamiliar to the practitioners of Parliamentary 'democracy' of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

It was, to anyone who had troubled to inform himself of the facts of human history and of their personal careers, incredible that men of the type of Hitler, Goer-

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ing and their immediate associates could be men of straw to be laughed aside, or mere clowns occupying for a farcical moment the stage of international politics. They were only too obviously daring and resolute men who had felt deeply the degradation of their race, who felt they had much to avenge, and who had attained power only by the exercise of great determination and self-sacrifice.

Hitler very early in his association with his Party had drawn up a twenty-five-point programme. There was, thus, no secret about his aims, three of which were the wiping out of the Peace Treaties, the return of the ex-colonies and the recognition of the Jew as an alien.

A man of known resolute and daring character pledged to the wiping out of the Peace Treaties who had made himself in a very few years the master of the German Parliamentary machine was a man neither to be ignored nor derided.

Soon after his accession to power it was made very evident that he proposed to rule Germany without the delays and encumbrances of the Parliamentary machine. Europe was presented with the phenomenon of a great nation under the complete and unhampered control of a small junta of men schooled in military ways and thought and imbued with the idea that the meek appeals for redress and help which had been made by their Parliamentary predecessors were of no avail. A decade and a half of such solicitations had not changed the Peace Treaties which kept Germany in odium and surrounded by armed neighbours, herself unarmed. It was, surely, a simple deduction that such men as now controlled the German nation would turn from requests to demands,

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and would strive to back those demands with adequate military force, whatever the rejected Treaties might say.

Demands for redress from a revitalised Germany could only be addressed in their major force to two nations—Britain and France.

Of these two nations Britain had, in pursuance of her pledged word, spent fifteen years in reducing her armaments.

There were grounds for believing that the German Republic, even before the advent of Herr Hitler, had begun secretly to rearm. It was certain that the new régime would lose no time in launching a great rearmament drive.

The British Government through the early months of 1933 showed no signs of being aware of the menace which the new Government in Germany must mean to our people.

I waited with considerable patience for some indication, however slight, that to the new situation the Disarmament policy of Britain would respond. On November 7th, my patience exhausted, and growing more alarmed at the enthusiastic unity of the German people behind Herr Hitler's policy, I published in *The Daily Mail* the following article :—

WE NEED 5,000 WAR-'PLANES !

" In the most vital of all departments of our national defence the Government is gravely neglecting its duty.

" Not since the Dutch Fleet burnt British shipping in the Medway 250 years ago has this country been so inadequately protected against the possibility of foreign attack as it is to-day.

" The fifteen years that have passed since the Great

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War have seen as much progress in armaments as the fifty that preceded them. During that time other nations have kept up with the requirements of their security; we have fallen far behind ours.

"The next war in Europe will be as different from the last as that was different from the Crimean campaign. It will begin with mass aeroplane attacks upon the great cities of the weaker Power. It may even end with them—and that right speedily—for, as Marshal Foch warned us, such attacks,

"'*owing to their crushing moral effect upon a nation, may impress public opinion to the point of disarming the Government, and thus become decisive.*'

"We are powerless to resist these perils. Successful defence in the air requires a preponderance of at least two to one.

"Our home defence force of 490 machines would be fortunate if it were not outnumbered in similar proportion by that of any other European State with which we might come into conflict.

"Of all the Great Powers we are the weakest in the air. There is a short-sighted Geneva-doped section of public opinion in this country which finds great satisfaction in such a state of affairs. To their perverted minds there appears to be a virtue in defencelessness, though they would be the first to be seized with hysterical panic if we ever had to pay the natural penalty of the risks we are so rashly running.

"Though I am a constant traveller, I have never heard a Frenchman express the view that his country was too lavishly equipped with the 3,000 aeroplanes it maintains in constant readiness for national defence. No Italian criticises his Government as extravagant for having 1,507 war-aeroplanes at its disposition. Even the people of the United States, isolated as they are by thousands of miles of ocean, find it natural that the American Air Force should possess 2,826 machines.

"The taxpayers of these countries are just as reluctant as our own to see their money wasted, but they have too much common sense to believe that under present

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world conditions it is anything but the most recklessly foolish of economies to be insufficiently defended in that most vulnerable of all areas, the sky above their heads.

" Great Britain is the last nation that can afford to stake her very existence upon the continuance of world peace. No other country on earth is so exposed to devastating air attack. Our capital city offers an almost ideal target for enemy bombers. It lies in the corner of the kingdom which is most accessible to air-raiders, with a broad estuary to guide them to its heart. Not only is it the centre of government, but it forms the greatest concentration of wealth and energy in the country, and through it one-third of the nation draws its supplies of food, which aerial bombing would instantly disorganise. Though we were to double the size of our Navy and our Army, we could at present be decisively defeated in any new European war by aerial action alone.

" Generations of immunity from invasion, based on former preponderance at sea, have given the British nation a false sense of security. That immunity exists no longer. The Navy in which we used to trust is not only powerless to shield us from the new danger to which we are exposed but would be itself in peril. It is a matter of common knowledge that in any future war in which we were engaged no battleship or cruiser would be able to navigate our home waters without meeting almost certain destruction from the air.

" Yet, while our Air Force remains hopelessly inadequate, there are people so blind to obvious facts that they are urging the Government to squander millions of money on building more warships. Though I myself was one of the founders of the Navy League at the end of the last century, when naval power was the best guarantee of our security, I most strongly oppose any further expenditure upon the Fleet until our first line of defence, which is now the Air Force, has been raised to at least three times its present strength.

" We need 5,000 war-aeroplanes if we are not to remain for ever at the mercy of our neighbours.

" France could conquer England to-day without land-

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ing a single soldier on our shores or fighting a single naval engagement. Germany, when she starts to equip herself with aerial armaments based on her already huge civilian flying industry, will surpass us almost overnight. From the nearest point of German territory, bombing squadrons could reach London in less than two hours. Not only that, but the range of action of modern aircraft would keep the entire country day and night at their mercy.

" Military transport by air has reached a state which lays us open to actual invasion. ' Within an hour of a declaration of war,' said the *Army, Navy and Air Force Gazette* last month, ' small combined forces could descend out of the sky and attack vital spots of this country.' Last February the United States Army conveyed a whole brigade of field artillery by air, the guns opening fire a few minutes after landing.

" If we fail to fill this fatal gap in our national defences, it is quite possible that many of us will live to see our country confronted at a few hours notice with the choice between acceptance of a humiliating ultimatum and virtual annihilation from the air.

" Though we have allowed four Powers to surpass us in aerial armaments, our need of them is greater than that of any other nation. The Royal Air Force is scattered throughout the world. Its squadrons are spread about the North-West frontier of India, Palestine and Transjordania, Egypt and the Sudan. It would be impossible to recall these machines in the hour of national danger; they are needed too badly where they are.

" No one has fought for the curtailment of national expenditure more consistently than I; but I say that our present policy in aerial defence is a policy of suicide. We should condemn the folly of a property-owner who saved money by stinting his fire-insurance, but our Government is content to leave the whole nation exposed to risks just as real and far more deadly. Since 1925 we have actually cut down our annual outlay on the Air Force by nearly 10 per cent. In that same period the similar expenditure of France and the United States has more than doubled.

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"It would, of course, be necessary that the expansion of the Royal Air Force required for national safety should be accompanied by ruthless economies in that extravagant ground organisation which has made our air arm so disproportionately expensive to maintain.

"The British Government's unsuccessful effort to persuade other nations to disarm by practical example has lasted long enough. In the House of Commons last May the Prime Minister stated that the increase of our Air Force to a one-Power standard 'could not be considered apart from the results of the Disarmament Conference.' Those results are manifest in its virtual collapse. The time has come for us to pay heed to our own peril and to meet it by creating without delay the most powerful Air Force in Europe. We can raise our aerial strength to 5,000 machines for less than the cost of three such huge and dubiously valuable battleships as the *Lord Nelson*. Our aircraft industry, a vital element of the nation's trade and transport, would receive a much-needed impetus from increased construction.

"No foreign country will see any provocation in this action of making our defensive forces proportionate to our needs. We want these machines as an element of national safety. Their purpose will be to act as an aerial garrison of these islands. In building them we shall arouse no more apprehension abroad than if we doubled the number of guns on Dover breakwater.

"If such an expansion of our aerial strength were combined with a defensive Franco-British alliance, the peace of Europe would be established indefinitely on unshakable foundations.

"Trade will always follow the flag, whether across the oceans or through the skies.

"Britain's past prosperity has rested on the sea. Her future lies in the air. We need 5,000 war-'planes!"

Had Britain in 1933 been set seriously to work to provide herself with such an air fleet, the whole course of history would have been changed.

Renascent Germany would not so boldly have broken

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the Treaty of Versailles without at least obtaining the good-will of the ex-Allied Powers. The destruction of that tyrannical instrument would have been brought about by amicable means, with the consent of the conquerors, and not by a series of German military steps and menaces each of which was in its turn to reveal to the world the new impotence of the British Empire. To-day Great Britain, and not Germany, would have been the arbiter of the world's diplomatic fortunes.

Having become convinced that the rise of Hitler to supreme power in Germany was an event that altered the whole of the complex relations of the various world Powers to each other, and particularly the relations between Britain and Germany, I devoted the whole of my energies to the attempt to stir Britain to an equal consciousness of our national danger and *our national opportunity*.

The danger was that a nation with a vast aerial fleet could destroy our old immunity from outside attack, and probably bring us to our knees by sealing our ports and thus rendering useless our otherwise well-guarded lines of Imperial communication.

The opportunity was that of placing ourselves in a helpful and friendly association with new Germany and, in concord with the German rulers, ending the vicious rule of the mistaken Treaty of Versailles.

To my self-appointed task I devoted myself in the full knowledge that I might—nay, must—incur great opposition. No community likes to be shaken from complacency. No statesman likes to be jolted by the revelation of unpalatable facts from a line of policy which he has persuaded a mass of electors is the result

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of his unique prescience. Whatever virtues there may be in a Parliamentary system founded upon universal suffrage, there is one weakness. The politicians who hold power must, to retain the votes of the masses, persuade the country that under their governance all goes well. To say that anything goes ill is—in their view—tantamount to saying that they have failed in their trust. This weakness resides in the system, no matter what party is in power. It affected Labour in 1931, when the Budget in April prepared nobody for the rigorous supplementary Budget after the crisis of August: it affected the National Government when in 1933 Mr. Baldwin feared to face what he supposed to be a wave of pacifism in the country and failed to call for immediate re-armament to meet what he knew to be a menacing situation on the Continent.

Realising this vividly, I had no real choice but to face it. The danger to Britain was so deadly and so imminent that I was compelled to speak out, whatever the opposition might prove to be in either strength or kind.

I had two means of action open to me. As the then director of the political policy of *The Daily Mail* I could and did speak directly to great masses of my fellow-countrymen, and I also took the strong line of urging my views privately upon those who actually wielded executive political power. It seemed to me necessary that both these means should be used.

To whatever catastrophe Britain might be drawn by her lack of military preparedness in an age of air armaments, I was determined that I should be under no self-accusation of either apathy or inaction.

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My article pleading for 5,000 war-'planes was followed by a consistent campaign in the newspapers with which I was associated.

On November 14th 1933 there appeared in *The Daily Mail* a leading article, characteristic of many, which took the occasion of the German elections to reiterate and rub home the contentions of my own earlier article. It was headed " Disarmament Means War," and it said, bluntly enough :—

> " The triumph of Herr Hitler in the German elections is one of the most remarkable events of our time. By something over 40,000,000 to 2,000,000 votes his countrymen have declared their absolute confidence in him.
>
> " This ' incomparable victory ' has been achieved by Herr Hitler through undoubted qualities of leadership. It marks the close of a revolution which has been carried out with less bloodshed and confusion than any other such movement in history. The Communist menace is finally exorcised. . . .
>
> " Behind him now stands a ' totalitarian ' State, which, by reason of its form of Government, can act with greater energy and speed than any Parliamentarian Administration, where everything is dependent on debate. It is a most significant fact that side by side with Herr Hitler stands at the head of this State General Goering, who served in the war in the world-renowned Richthofen ' circus ' as an airman and is now German Air Commissioner. *The rapid expansion of the German Air Force as the result of his influence may be taken as certain.*
>
> " Everywhere abroad the air arm is being more and more definitely regarded as the decisive weapon of the future. While in Germany General Goering can champion its needs most effectively with the ' Leader,' in Italy Signor Mussolini has just taken all three services, Air, Navy and Army, into his strong hands, so as to make certain that the Air is not sacrificed to the jealousies of the older services. It is necessary for the British public to mark these developments.

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"The Socialist Party once more demanded yesterday in the House of Commons that Great Britain should still further reduce her already attenuated armaments. It is a mad suggestion. *In the present state of the world disarmament means war.*

"No country with such vast possessions as ours can expect to live long on sufferance. . . .

"Let us have no more fatuous talk about disarmament. It is high time that the Prime Minister gave the country a plain and resolute lead on this head. He said yesterday that it would be suicidal to check the development of our civil aviation.

"He has rendered great service to Britain in the past, but he would render still greater service to her if he finally turned his back on the Disarmament Conference and refused any longer to plough the sands at Geneva.

"It is of the most vital importance that he should strengthen British defences by raising the Air Force to 5,000 machines."

Four months later, on March 8th 1934, Mr. Baldwin gave the assurance that :—

". . . the National Government will see to it that in air strength and air power this country shall no longer be in a position inferior to any country within striking distance of our shores."

Twelve months afterwards, on March 11th 1935, Mr. Baldwin made another statement on which, the following morning, I caused this comment to be made in a leading article :—

"In the important debate in the House of Commons yesterday, Mr. Baldwin had to admit that *the British Air Force is 'still only fifth.'* Sir Austen Chamberlain gave reason for believing that its position was even lower —sixth or seventh. Indeed, there is some reason to believe that *our Air Force may have fallen as low as eighth.*

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"A large loan to meet the cost of providing an imposing fleet of aircraft, with aerodromes and other necessities of national defence would be perfectly justified. It would provide employment for a host of workers and give the nation security."

(*Daily Mail*, March 12th 1935.)

The following month I returned to the attack in another leading article :—

"The safety of this country, and indeed its independence since the development of the air arm, rests above all on security against air attacks, to which Great Britain is more exposed than any other country in Europe.

"Year in and year out, both before the war and after it, *The Daily Mail* strove to rouse public opinion to the supreme necessity of an adequate air fleet. In 1919 we warned the nation of the risk—which has now become an actuality—that the Air Force, because it was new, might be sacrificed to the older and senior Services.

"In 1922, supported by General Groves, we called in vain for energetic steps to be taken to 'recover Britain's lost air power.' More recently, week by week, and almost day by day, we have pointed out two vital facts : the first, that *Germany has been creating for herself the most powerful Air Force in the world*; and the second, that for the very existence of Great Britain it was all-important for the British Government to stop entreating Germany to disarm and to create a really adequate British air fleet.

"At last, after protracted delay, half-hearted measures were put in hand last year, which will in two years *add some* 300 *machines to the British strength*. But meantime there is every reason to believe that *Germany is building more machines in a week than Britain contemplates building in twenty-four months*. We note that our contemporaries, most of whom neglected all warnings, are now demanding in alarm that the Government shall regain what they call our lost air parity.

"Have they any idea what that would mean in present circumstances? The German air fleet, by the close of

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this year (1935), will probably number 20,000 aeroplanes. Only the most vigorous and energetic action can cope with such a situation as this; and that action should be taken immediately. The watch-word should be Signor Mussolini's 'Be strong and be ready,' for strength and readiness make for peace."

(*Daily Mail*, April 30th 1935).

The effect of this campaign upon the Government and the House of Commons politicians can perhaps best be summed up in the words of yet another leading article, written more than a year later, when Mr. Baldwin made his famous confession that he had not been frank on the question of rearmament:—

"Long before the Fulham election of 1933, which was the cause of Mr. Baldwin's fright, *The Daily Mail* had urged the need of stronger armaments. At the very time when Mr. Baldwin was growing weak at the knees we opened a strenuous campaign demanding a strong Air Force as of paramount importance for British security. . . .

"What was the result? Our long-continued campaign received not a tittle of support or encouragement from Ministers. *It was like pounding a feather bed for all the reaction it got from the Government.*

"But there is not the slightest doubt that if the Government had given any sign that it realised the significance of our campaign, and its disclosures, the country would have united in the demand for rapid and large-scale rearmament.

"Appeals were constantly made to Ministers to put the facts plainly and authoritatively before the nation, but with no result. Their policy was to minimise foreign armaments and to repeat complacently at short intervals 'All is well.'"

(*Daily Mail*, November 14th 1936.)

It will be seen that we had not made much progress in the accumulation of the 5,000 'planes that I was advocating.

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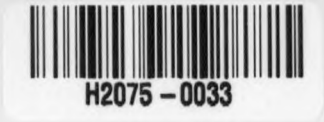
CHAPTER TWO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CHAPTER TWO

My campaign for immediate and strong aerial rearmament, launched in 1933, was inevitably the object of much criticism.

I was accused of being a " bull of aircraft shares "—that is, of having bought shares in manufacturing companies which I wanted to see forced to a higher price on the stockmarket so that I could make a handsome personal profit.

As a matter of fact I had sold out any such shares that I happened to hold in the way of normal investment before the campaign was launched. I even parted with shares in the Rolls-Royce Company, as it was interested in aircraft-engine making.

The charge that I was using my newspapers to frighten the people of Britain and to create world uneasiness for personal gain through market operations in shares was as baseless as it was despicable. I had no such shares.

At the time when newspapers and cinema news-reels were ridiculing Herr Hitler as a kind of Charlie Chaplin of politics, I *knew* that he had been swept into power by a kind of pentecostal fury which had seized and stirred the German people. I *knew* that he had avowed his intention of tearing up the diktat of Versailles and regaining for Germany her lost colonies.

As one of the four major Powers which had dictated

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the Treaty, Britain could not help but be one of the main objects of Germany's menacing attention.

As the Government seemed either unaware of these things or unwilling to warn the people, I had sounded the alarm.

The facts on which I based my deductions of the new turn in world affairs were not veiled facts. From the end of January 1933 the menace to Britain was growing, and was known to be growing. But the so-called Intelligence Departments seemed to keep back the truth from the British people, or they revealed it to statesmen who themselves kept it back.

During the past six years I have been many times in Germany. I know—and always knew—that the actual condition of British armaments was better known in Berlin than to any individual member of the British Cabinet.

The German Intelligence Service is limitless in its sources and resources. Every item of information it receives is obviously checked and re-checked to ensure perfect accuracy. Berlin needed no British publicist or newspaper to tell its military chiefs that Britain's defences had fallen into disrepair. The only people who needed telling were the British themselves.

The root lesson of Herr Hitler's coming to power was that the Europe which had been shaped by three civilian Parliamentarians and a College Professor in Paris after the war of 1914–18 no longer existed. The fond hope of France that Germany could be disarmed while a ring of small States round her frontiers was encouraged to arm, and that this condition could last indefinitely, was ended.

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If the new Germany chose to arm vigorously, as any man of sense knew she would and must arm, the precarious peace which had as its only guarantee the as yet really untried League of Nations would be in instant jeopardy.

Of all the nations, Britain, by her geographical position and her economic circumstances, would be the most endangered. So impressed was I by this conviction that on November 14th 1933 I published the following article, which is as fresh and vital to-day as the day it was written :—

WHAT WILL THE NEXT WAR BE LIKE ?

" Britain's safety at this moment depends entirely on the forbearance of other nations.

" Our professional Army, which was never anything more than an Imperial police-force, has been cut down. We have lost that supremacy at sea which was our safe guard in times gone by. Worst of all, our Air Force—now the first line of defence, not only of these islands but of the merchant shipping on which we rely for our very existence—has been so reduced that it is hardly large enough to do battle with a Balkan State.

" The British public's indifference to its danger is due to the fact that it regards national defence as a technical question which may safely be left to military experts.

" Our national history supplies ample evidence that such confidence is unfounded.

" Major-General J. F. C. Fuller, one of the ablest of military thinkers, with a most distinguished war record, has frankly stated that :—

" ' *In the past we have lulled ourselves to sleep on dogmas, and have been rudely awakened by realities which we have never troubled to foresee. Though we are soldiers, professing soldiership, most of us know no more about the science of war than a chimpanzee knows about the science of dynamics.*'

" The one thing certain about the next war is that it

will be totally different from the last. Modern scientific invention moves at such a pace that military practice needs to be constantly transformed in order to keep up.

"When this is not done, costly lessons have to be learnt in the course of hostilities. The outbreak of the last war was followed by a tragic series of such discoveries. We were short of machine guns, short of heavy field artillery, short of the right kind of shell.

"Is the next war going to find us even more unprepared?

"I say with complete conviction that if we do not immediately equip ourselves with an adequate Air Force this country will, at the very outset of another European conflict, be in deadly danger not only of defeat but of virtual annihilation.

"Perhaps at this moment WAR has once more escaped from its lair and is moving towards the peoples with giant strides.

"If so, we may be sure that it will present itself in a new and more terrible form. The campaigns of the past have begun with mobilisation, with the gradual concentration, equipment and advance of great masses of men. In 1914 it was three weeks after the declaration of war that the first shot was fired by a British soldier in France.

"That was the last war that will ever start that way. Next time, immediately war is declared, the commander-in-chief of the enemy nation will press a button, and 20,000—perhaps 50,000—aeroplanes, laden with bombs and gas, will rise into the air and set off at more than 200 miles an hour to rain destruction on this country.

"Unless we are ready to meet such an attack, the war—and Britain's existence as a Great Power—will end that same day.

"People who think that an attack upon these islands by 20,000 aeroplanes is impossible are simply fooling themselves. Our own Air Force possessed 22,171 machines in October 1918. If the war had lasted another six months it would have had 50,000 in service. And, of all instruments of war, aeroplanes are the easiest to manufacture swiftly and secretly.

"They can be turned out in series as simply as motor-

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cars. If one single works in Detroit has produced 20,000 motor-cars a week, there is nothing to prevent any highly industrialised country from bringing a huge air fleet into existence before the rest of the world has any inkling of it.

" M. Georges Mandel, who was the closest associate of Clemenceau during the historic war-Premiership of that great French statesman, warned the Chamber of Deputies last Thursday that 'Germany is building bombing aeroplanes and is in a position to turn out 2,500 machines a month.'

" A great deal of nonsense is talked about the impossibility of finding pilots for such an Air Force. Any intelligent and fit young man can be taught to fly an aeroplane in a fortnight. Hundreds of them have learnt in this country during their spare time in summer evenings. At the beginning of the war, five hours solo flying qualified a pilot to go on active service. Even in 1917 the minimum required before proceeding to France was only thirty-five hours. A nation like Germany, with hundreds of thousands of trained, disciplined and keen young athletes, could create an efficient Air Force in a few weeks.

" Old-fashioned, pre-war ideas about flying are far too prevalent in this country. We talk of a mass aerial invasion as if it were as improbable as a visitation from Mars. It is, in point of fact, a perfectly practicable present-day enterprise.

" Britain will never know security until she has the strongest Air Force in Europe. We have been gambling for years upon the totally baseless assumption that other nations would reduce their aerial armaments. They are steadily increasing them.

" As far back as February 1932 the Government, in introducing the Air Estimates, said :—

" ' *Despite general recognition of the growing dependence of the British Empire on air power, as on sea power, the serious disparity between the first-line strength of the Royal Air Force and foreign air services remains. . . . His Majesty's Government would view the situation with anxiety but for their earnest*

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hope and expectation that the Disarmament Conference will bring about a reduction in air armaments.'

"This was twenty-one months ago, and there are still foolish people looking for some practical results from that conference.

"We cannot afford to go on being defended by 'earnest hopes and expectations' that have no foundation of fact. Until we have an initial 5,000 war-'planes we shall be in the gravest danger from the air.

"Not a penny should be spent on increasing any other form of national armaments until this wide breach in our defences has been closed. In Great Britain, as in France, powerful vested interests, professional and industrial, have grown up around the Navy and the Army. These can pull many strings to divert the nation's money to those purposes with which they are identified. Such pressure must be firmly resisted. The nation's need is aircraft. It can no longer be neglected. Otherwise, we shall expose ourselves and our country to terrible disaster."

In forming my mental picture of a new war I was not dependent upon my imagination. My brother, Lord Northcliffe, had been the first Englishman to grasp the potentialities of heavier-than-air flying machines, and had done much to encourage the development of aircraft, and even more to develop skill in flying them. With his efforts I had been associated. During the war it was part of my duty to study air problems, and after the war I had made and retained the friendship of many young professional airmen, some from the fighting services and others devoted to civilian aviation.

More important, perhaps, than these qualifications for predicting what a new war would be like, was the fact that certain words used by Marshal Foch, the Allied Generalissimo, soon after the war had taken a great hold of my layman's thought on these matters.

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Marshal Foch wrote—more than fifteen years ago—the warning already quoted :—

> " The potentialities of aircraft attack on a large scale are almost incalculable. But it is clear that such attack, owing to the crushing moral effect on a nation, may impress public opinion to the point of disarming the Government, and thus becoming decisive."

Had it not been so painfully obvious it would have been incredible that what that magnificent soldier of the old school saw so vividly was not seen equally clearly by our own heads of the fighting forces.

A man intent upon giving a desperate alarm can be no respecter of persons. He must awaken the sleepers at all costs, and thrust aside the inert.

After very serious thought I published on January 2nd 1934 a " New Year Message " to those who did me the honour consistently to read the newspaper whose policy I at the time directed. It was actually directed at a much wider audience.

In that message I said several very rude things about the elderly gentlemen who were at the head of the Army and Navy. After more than four years of further experience I do not retract or tone down those aggressive words : I re-emphasise them.

This was the Message :—

MY NEW YEAR MESSAGE

> " My New Year's message is LOOK UP.
>
> " Look up into the air above your heads, and let your New Year resolution be to make the air safe for Britain.
>
> " I am not a panic-monger, but as the responsible head of several big businesses it has been my life-long

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habit to face facts and draw straightforward conclusions from them.

"Most politicians flinch from facts. They prefer smooth phrases that lull the electorate into lethargy.

"It is with smooth and false phrases about general disarmament that the politicians have paralysed public opinion, while Great Britain's position in the air has steadily declined from the first place to the fifth.

"In that position we are totally unsafe. I accuse no nation of planning to attack us, but I maintain that a rich and vulnerable country like ours must be properly defended against the swift and deadly danger of an air attack.

"Britons of a generation ago were more alert in such vital matters. Never for a moment would they have allowed a Government to trifle with the two-Power standard for the British Navy. Yet even that standard did not save the people of Yarmouth and Scarborough and Whitby from being bombarded at the beginning of the war.

"What would be the fate of those towns if another Great War broke out in 1934? What would be the fate threatening every single town in the whole length and breadth of the land, from Thurso to Penzance, and from Norwich to Milford Haven? Smashing, crushing, cruel destruction; the massacre of men, women and children; wholesale havoc; the disorganisation of public services, communications and food supply; a violent throw-back to conditions bordering on barbarism—and all because we have left a gap in our country's defences as wide as the heavens themselves.

"In the matter of national safety there is now but one standard—the number of aeroplanes, military and civilian, that a country possesses. A nation might have the most powerful fleet the world has ever seen, with an army like the sands of the sea for multitude; but if the air above its territory remains open to enemy attack, it will lose any war in which it engages before its earthbound forces have a chance of coming into action.

"There is no augury so bad for Britain's future as the fact that her politicians ever since the war have failed

to realise that we have entered a new Age of Air-Power.

"Ten years ago they announced a strength of fifty-two squadrons as the minimum required for home defence. To-day, when every other civilised nation has doubled or trebled its air-strength, we are still ten squadrons short of what was laid down as the lowest limit of safety under the conditions existing ten years back. And of the forty-two squadrons we do possess, thirteen are staffed by civilian airmen, whose training is restricted to their spare time.

"No less alarming than past neglect of air defence is the trumpery reparation of it proposed by the present Government. Roused at last to action by the pressure of public opinion, they have announced their intention of building the ten squadrons of which we are short on the admitted needs of a decade ago.

"The farcical inadequacy of this proposal is positive proof of the incapacity of the old men who rule our country, and of those who, at the head of the Army and Navy, keep the clutch of the dead hand of tradition tight upon the allotment of Service expenditure.

"Their brains are ossified. They cannot grasp the fact that the whole basis of national defence has changed.

"These mediævalists still cling to their twenty-two regiments of cavalry, armed with lance and sabre, and their long columns of horse and mule transport that a few gas-bombs would reduce to carrion. They even spend £20,000 a year on an Equitation School at Weedon, where officers, in order to train themselves for modern war, hunt foxes three days a week on Government horses, and are taught fancy jumping for International Horse Shows.

"It is natural, perhaps, that the men at the head of the Navy and Army should keep their eyes closed to the fact that the Air is the Senior Service of to-day. They attain to such positions only at the very end of their careers; they hold them for a brief period; and they may hesitate to incur the labour and antagonism involved in scrapping out-of-date armaments and admitting the paramount claims of air-defence.

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"Yet until this is done we shall remain at the mercy of the first aggressor. The forms of protection in which we used to trust are themselves vulnerable to the all-pervading peril of air attack. Warships to-day are simply death-traps. The Navy knows well that its next adversary will not be another fleet, but swarms of torpedo-carrying aeroplanes. Even submarines are plainly visible under water to the airman, and can be sunk by depth-charges dropped beside them. As for military camps and arsenals, they would be as helpless as civilian centres of population against the aircraft that would continually harry them.

"The air is the broadest of all possible roads to the heart of any country. If we had had at the Dardanelles two dozen aeroplanes capable of bombing Constantinople, there would have been no need to land 470,000 men on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

"The Government must completely reverse its perspective as to armaments. The big battalions of the future will be marshalled in the air. I am confident that within three years Great Britain will need a force of 25,000 machines for her defence.

"While we cling to the standards of a day gone by, other nations are adapting themselves to the new conditions. I have been told on unimpeachable authority in Paris that Germany, by using her commercial air-lines as a training-school, has equipped herself with six times as many pilots as the French Army possesses—and they in turn are three or four times as numerous as those of the Royal Air Force.

"The facts about the expansion of the German air industry, published in the Brussels newspaper *Le Soir*, and quoted in last Friday's *Daily Mail*, are a plain indication of the paramount importance which practical and energetic men at the head of that nation attach to air power.

"Anyone who can imagine what would be the condition to-day of a country which a hundred years ago had clung to stage-coaches and smooth-bore muskets instead of moving with the times, can form a good idea of what Great Britain will be a generation hence if

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she remains indifferent to the opportunities and the dangers of the air.

"A year ago, after a tour of the Middle East, the Secretary of State for Air, Lord Londonderry, said that 'as soon as the boundary line into Asia is passed, the Royal Air Force becomes the symbol of British power.' He might had added with greater truth that as soon as the boundary-line into Europe is passed, it becomes the symbol of British weakness.

"Air-power cannot be improvised when a crisis comes. Under the most favourable conditions it will take three years to build and man an air fleet adequate for our defence. If the tension that is gathering in Europe leads to conflict before this process is completed, the men responsible for the paltriness of the nation's air resources will be guilty of the greatest betrayal in British history.

"Our country's standing in the air should not be fifth, but first. To that we are entitled by our overseas commitments and by the exceptionally exposed position of these islands. By building the greatest air fleet in the world we shall not imperil international peace, but preserve it. It was with no fifth-rate Navy that we used to keep the peace upon the seas.

"To make Britain safe from air attack is the most vital task before the country. Readers of *The Daily Mail* should realise that, in whatever part of the kingdom they may be, they are on ground that will be in danger of bombardment from the very first moment of another war. If they value the protection of their families and themselves from horrors passing all imagination, they must make this question of air defence the most urgent topic of our time.

"By talking about it wherever they go; by raising it at every political meeting, they can compel the inert old men who control our national affairs to give the country security against its present danger. Not till then can we look up at the sky above without the apprehension that one day we may see it filled with waves of aerial invaders spreading destruction broadcast over the land."

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Some few days before that New Year message I had published, on December 20th 1933, an article hammering home the lesson that strategically we were living in a new world. It is a fact that many even to-day have not fully realised. I wrote then :—

> " I have profound respect for the glorious record of the Royal Navy. It was the career I chose for one of my own sons. But its huge and costly floating fortresses have had their day. They are no longer the first line of our defence. The progress of science has made us vulnerable in a new dimension. The Fleet cannot preserve us from the deadly peril of the air.
>
> " Hitherto international warfare, both afloat and ashore, has been waged between fighting men, professional or temporary. The whole science and art of war has been devoted to meeting and beating the organised defensive forces of the enemy.
>
> " Flying has changed all that. In future it is civilian populations that will be the object of attack. Fast fleets of aeroplanes will instantaneously begin to ravage the great cities, and destroy the docks, railways, power stations and factories of the adversary nation.
>
> " What could the Navy do to protect us against such an onslaught ? It would have its work cut out to save itself from destruction. In the last war the Grand Fleet found refuge from submarines in Scapa Flow. In the next war such a concentration would soon join the sunken German vessels that lie at the bottom of that famous anchorage. It could not escape the torpedoes launched by war-'planes swooping down at ten times the speed of the submarines.
>
> " The same danger would prevent the Fleet from fulfilling its other function of escorting our foodships to the various British ports that are their destination. Great Britain is surrounded by land-locked seas through which incoming steamers are obliged to pass by routes that admit of little variation.
>
> " These narrow waters would be gateways of doom for British shipping.

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"No food convoy could ever get within a hundred miles of a British port. Commerce-destroying aeroplanes far more deadly than the groping, creeping submarine would sink them far out at sea. From the moment the aerial siege of these islands began, not a British vessel in home waters could survive."

When I wrote and published those insistent articles at the turn of the year 1933–34 it seemed to me, as it seems to me now, that those who under-rated the power of the aeroplane were ignorant of the lessons of human history. The professional fighting-man, I knew, was always among the most conservative of minds in regard to his own job. This view of the effect of new weapons I cannot demonstrate any better now than I did over five years ago :—

"When the young Napoleon Bonaparte routed the Austrian generals in his first Italian campaign, there were bitter protests from his defeated adversaries that he had not conquered 'according to the rules of war.'

"Human nature has not even yet learnt the lesson that *the great victories that change the course of history are almost always due to innovations*. In war, as in industry, a new idea, energetically developed, may put early processes out of date, and ruin those who have clung to them.

"Nations that in the past have fallen behind the times in the matter of security have always paid the penalty in defeat and loss of liberty.

"The Carthaginians, with their superior sea power, were convinced that they would always dominate the Romans, until some ingenious Latin one day invented the simple device of a grappling beam, to be dropped on the decks of Carthaginian ships, so as to hold them fast and give the formidable fighting qualities of the Roman soldier a chance to make themselves felt at close quarters.

"In a similar way, it was not numbers but new tactics that enabled the Tartar hordes of Tamerlane and Genghis Khan to sweep right across both Asia and Europe,

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destroying all the peoples in their path between Mongolia and the shores of the Adriatic. These wild horsemen had learnt to shoot their arrows at full gallop. Other nations of their day, which relied on hand-to-hand conflict, were never able to get to grips with them.

" The discovery that the English archers' ' cloth yard shaft ' could slaughter the heavily armoured knights of France before they came close enough to charge won the battles of Crecy, Poitiers and Agincourt, and brought great tracts of French territory under English rule for three generations.

" Nelson's naval victories, too, were mainly due to a novel manœuvre, advocated by a civilian, and known as ' breaking the line,' which brought all the guns of a British fleet in succession to bear upon a smaller number of the opposing vessels, and replaced the older method of laying ships alongside each other to exchange broadsides and boarding-parties.

" Almost every international conflict, indeed, is marked by some new turn in the art of war, which takes conservative military opinion by surprise. In the South African campaign of thirty-five years ago, the Boer marksmen startled the British Army authorities by their revelation of the devastating possibilities of rifle-fire.

" The Great War ended with mass attacks by Tanks, a weapon which, for many months after its outbreak the military experts were still rejecting as fantastic.

" None of these contrivances, however, has caused anything like the revolutionary change which the use of swarms of aeroplanes will bring about in the fighting of the future.

" The nation which is the first to equip itself with an overwhelming force of this most flexible and decisive of all weapons will hold world-power in the hollow of its hand."

In the short space of a newspaper article it was not possible for me to reinforce this viewpoint of warfare by all the available examples. What I wrote about the Carthaginian beam, the Tartar cavalry, the British bow-

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men, was equally true of many other new weapons—the needle-gun, the Maxim, the Nordenfelt, the land-mine amongst them.

When I first wrote of the tremendous power and immense potentialities of the new arm of the air I did not then foresee how quickly new tactics would increase their menace and their promise. It was not until 1938 that the civil war of Spain, performing all the functions of a research station for daring airmen, revealed that the threat of the aeroplane as seen in 1934 could be many times augmented.

In 1934 it was everywhere assumed that among the means of defence against air raiders would be the familiar use of listening-posts, which would give warnings of the approach of hostile 'planes, and enable the menaced civilians to seek shelter and the fighting 'planes and anti-aircraft guns to take station. By 1938 it was known that 'planes need give no such sound warning. Pilots flying at great height and great speed proved that they were able to shut off their engines and 'coast' silently for the last 200 miles of their journey to some unwarned and helpless target.[1]

The new tactics developed in Spain five years after my first warnings to Britain of the significance of the air arm proved that, far from being a wild alarmist, I had even been too moderate in the pictures I had drawn of the new menace which my countrymen and I had to face.

But in those years we saw no attempt to equip us with the 5,000 war-'planes that I had first regarded as an

[1] See, for a description of this method, a remarkable book by Mr. Langdon-Davies called *Air Raid.*

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essential minimum. In 1934 an air programme was, indeed, laid before Parliament, only to become patently inadequate before the following year. So inadequate was it that I 'inspired' in *The Daily Mail* on May 14th 1935, a leading article with the then startling heading:

WANTED 10,000 AEROPLANES.

With that demand I coupled a new criticism of what to me seemed an obvious weakness not only in the extent of our preparations but also in the manner.

Before discussing this weakness—*which still exists and is one of our present dangers*—I want to recall another phase of my effort to arouse both people and Government to their continuing peril.

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CHAPTER THREE

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CHAPTER THREE

WHILE I was using the means at my command of approaching directly the mind of the British public, I did not neglect those opportunities which I had of appealing to the minds of men charged with the safety of Great Britain.

I happened to be visiting the Dominion of South Africa in 1934 when Mr. Baldwin made his famous statement that the frontier of Great Britain is the Rhine, a somewhat dangerous paraphrase of the familiar tag that the frontiers of Britain are the coastlines of the enemy. So strongly did the implications of this statement affect me that I wrote to the Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, about it :—

Sept. 30th 1934.

"MY DEAR PRIME MINISTER,

"The statement that the Rhine is now Britain's frontier is, I believe, the most grave pronouncement ever made. Its only justification would be if the Government, whilst pursuing this policy, were engaged on intensive rearmaments.

"As it stands it is a policy of Big Words and Little Armaments. When one knows the preparations being made by the Germans, the programme of adding 600 aeroplanes to our air force within the next five years amounts to little more than a tragic hoax.

"Germany is the only country to-day that has a programme of mass production of aeroplanes and mass production of pilots. These two activities are working hand in hand. I have been at great pains to collect from all

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kinds of travellers in Germany their impressions of the dimensions of Germany's rearmament.

" All the reports are of the most alarming character. . . .

" Your Government's foreign policy is entirely out of proportion to the armed forces which it commands. Its advisers talk about squadrons of aeroplanes, whereas in Germany the talk is of fleets of aeroplanes. Those in control there have a programme of tens of thousands of aeroplanes.

" The Junker works at Dessau, not far from Berlin, will be complete by the end of November. They are four times the size of the Ford Dagenham works and the 16,000 present employees are to be increased to 30,000.

" Moreover, the Germans are engaged in the intensive manufacture of submarines. One important concern has large floating cash assets in Germany. With a view to realising this money they decided to build tramp steamers in Germany. On applying to Blohm and Voss, Germany's biggest ship-builders, they were told that they were fully engaged and could not tender for the work, although, on an inspection of their works at Hamburg, there was not one single ship on the stocks. There was, however, great activity under cover, and it was learned that the work in hand was the building of a new type of submarine.

" The Germans claim that they can build a new aerodrome in seven weeks. They are not constructing many because the light bombing machine which has now gone into mass production can land in any fairly level open field. These machines are now tucked away in low hills in the west of Hanover. They are all-metal, all-weather 'planes, so that exposure to the elements does not impair their efficiency.

" In these most dangerous times I do urge you not to indulge in what, in commercial circles, would be described as over-trading. When you tell the people of Britain that the Rhine is their frontier, you should be able to make them aware that you can enforce this policy. This you cannot do unless you have ready at a minute's notice a fleet of the fastest bombing machines not fewer than 10,000 in number."

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In a similar strain I wrote the following month to the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, the present Prime Minister, and on October 7th I wrote to another very powerful member of the Cabinet a letter in which I said :—

> " . . . It fills me with dismay when I observe we have a foreign policy careering along in complete disregard of our perilous insecurity. It is like an unballasted ship under full sail.
>
> " Before the Great War the Foreign Minister had the support of an invincible navy. To-day the aeroplane rules the narrow seas, for there is not a single warship big or little which could not be destroyed either by direct bombing or through the dropping of depth-charges.
>
> " We have two alternatives : Either we must arm to the teeth in the air, or we must follow a policy of neutrality, dangerous as it may be. The really dangerous policy is to assure France that we shall help her in the grave emergency that may lie almost immediately ahead when our fighting resources are quite negligible."

This letter, I would emphasise, was written before the fiasco of Abyssinia and Sanctions and long before the Godesberg–Munich crisis proved how just and right was its last paragraph.

To the various letters written by me at that time to so many of my old political friends I duly received answers. These, unfortunately, were private and confidential, so I may not disclose them. But I betray no confidence in making the general statement that none of these answers showed any disposition to share my anxiety or alarm. Most, if not all, minimised Germany's strength. I have in my archives one letter deriding the suggestion that Germany was building any submarines. It conceded the fact that Germany was making submarine

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periscopes, but these were for the export trade. Certainly there was no question of any actual submarines. This well-informed rebuttal reached me some three months before pictures of Germany's new submarine fleet appeared in a Danish daily newspaper.

My contention that the air arm rendered floating fleets vulnerable was also scouted. On October 22nd 1934 I had occasion to write privately to the Postmaster-General about a disparity in ocean telephone rates. Having concluded my information on this Departmental matter, I added :—

> " The public believes that you are a man who gets things done. Can I enlist your support in forcing on your colleagues the vital necessity of pushing on with a really adequate programme of aerial rearmaments ?
>
> " Germany hour by hour, day and night, week in week out, is building an immense aerial armada. Some Germans think that the oligarchs of Berlin have in hand a programme for the building of not fewer than 25,000 aeroplanes. There is no difficulty in doing this. The light bombing aeroplane of to-day is, except for its high-power engine, not really more complex than one of the new Ford cars. Goering, von Papen and the other Pan-Germans now in charge of German affairs, will not be moved by Geneva discussions or intimidated by half-and-half pacts of mutual assistance between their possible antagonists. The only factor weighing with them will be whether their antagonists can return blow for blow.
>
> " Our dangerous unpreparedness is an invitation to attack.
>
> " Nearly half our expenditure on the fighting forces is devoted to the Navy. In certain German circles it is claimed that the British Navy in the next war will be completely out of action in the narrow seas.
>
> " They say the picture of convoys of merchant ships reaching British ports under the protection of the Navy as in the last war is to-day a fantasy. They claim that no

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naval or merchant ships will be able to live within a hundred miles of the coast of Great Britain; that they cannot survive direct bombing or depth-charges dropped by immensely swift aeroplanes.

"Even the most powerful battleships, they assert, if not destroyed outright, will have their rudders and propellers blown away by depth-charges at a distance of a quarter of a mile.

"I want you to urge upon your colleagues that the truth of these assertions should be tested under the observation of three or four civilians of repute. It should not be left to the Navy, because professional jealousy and tradition naturally enough set up an atmosphere of antagonism.

"There are plenty of old ships of anything up to 20,000 tons which would serve excellently for an adequate test.

"I may appear apprehensive and intrusive, but I can well see at some not distant date your or some other British Government, will, if the supreme aim of national safety is neglected, have at six hours' notice to make the decision between abject, painful surrender or destruction from the air."

We still await a report of unbiased civilians of repute on the still-vexed question of the potency of aircraft in sinking floating warships.

My public campaign urging the British people to awaken to their danger and take steps to guard themselves against it had one passing effect. It was a sudden disposition of the politicians to entreat the electorate not to listen to what they called panic-mongering. This injunction was so typical that I would have been amused had I not been so perturbed. To the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, on whose sturdy common sense and business training I placed full reliance, I felt compelled to write as follows:—

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Mount Nelson Hotel,
Cape Town,
October 5th 1934.

"....

"I do not like butting in, but I cannot help thinking that the appeals of Government spokesmen, including yourself, not to listen to counsels of panic are injudicious and misplaced.

"There is every reason for the greatest anxiety in England in regard to Germany's construction of an aerial armada. Two years before the sailing of the Spanish Armada, when news travelled very slowly, it was well known in England that the Armada was under construction and was intended for the conquest of our country.

"To-day Germany, day and night, week in and week out, is building an immense air force with, as many people think, the intention of raiding and ravishing England and France. Yet the National Government, whose first duty is to secure national safety, has apparently nothing more than the most meagre programme for meeting this supreme menace.

"In the course of my business I am in receipt of all kinds of information, more or less accurate, in regard to Germany's intentions and preparations. I fully believe that a supreme crisis in our national fate may not be far distant. . . ."

From this I went on to elaborate my views about the rightful apportionment of public money between the three services and to communicate certain facts that I had gathered about the relative strengths of the British and German preparations. I reminded my correspondent that :—

"We know that although Germany eight years before the Great War armed each battalion of her army with sixteen machine guns, the Expeditionary Force landed in France with two machine guns per battalion. Mr. Lloyd George says that at the outbreak of the Great War not

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> a single thought had been given by the Admiralty in regard to what were necessary counter measures against submarine attack. . . ."

I ended this letter with a warning which the fate of Austria and Czecho-Slovakia four years later proved to be well founded.

The few extracts that I have reprinted here are but samples and examples of many letters written at that time. I was determined that whatever might happen to the nation, it should not happen in default of any protesting and warning voice. However apathetic and lethargic might be the electorate and those whom they elected, I was determined that my own responsibility as a private citizen should be clear. Having detected the danger, I had to cry it aloud.

In the early months of 1935 I had gathered about me several young airmen of distinguished records. With their aid I founded an association called "The National League of Airmen." This was a body of zealots prepared to do from the platform what I had been trying to do through the columns of the Press—arouse the populace and the Ministry to the need for a strong air force.

This effort, as might have been expected, drew forth the easy gibe that it was some kind of "publicity stunt," designed to further the sale of newspapers and increase my personal fortune through increased dividends. The truth was that insistence upon our unpreparedness and perpetual criticism of Ministers for neglect of their duty, so far from increasing the sale of newspapers, lowered them. The financing of a campaign of public meetings and the organising of an association of some

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thousands of members who were only asked to pay half-a-crown a year towards circularisation and the like were to me an expensive business.

But I was not engaged in some political game of harassing particular Ministers or of making the blood of the public run cold. I, and those who came to be associated with me, were striving desperately to save our countrymen at home and overseas from disaster and possible destruction. We were endeavouring to prevent all those diplomatic humiliations which Britain had in the event to suffer between the day when Herr Hitler's troops marched into the Rhineland and the day when they marched into Sudetenland.

The whole purpose of my stream of letters to Ministers of the Crown was to persuade them to see the truth about our international relations as I saw it and to rouse the people to a self-protective effort.

How little response there was to such an effort can be gleaned from an interchange of letters that took place as late as March 1936.

General Goering had said, quite openly, to a friend of mine that Germany was adding one new aeroplane to her fleet every half-hour. This assertion I passed to one or two of my friends in the Cabinet. One wrote :—

> ". . . I am not clear whether this meant day and night or day only. If the latter, and taking five working days of eight hours a day, this would produce eighty aeroplanes a week which doesn't seem at all improbable.
>
> " It is some comfort to know that we are getting on well with our own programme."

I immediately replied :—

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". . . when Goering said that every half-hour a first-class powerful aeroplane was added to the German air fleet, he meant every half-hour of the twenty-four hours.

"The German munition and aircraft factories are unquestionably working night and day, Sundays included.

A few days afterwards I wrote to this Minister and one or two of his colleagues enclosing a copy of a letter sent to one of their high technical advisers :—

"The Germans have many thousands of aeroplanes, now the supreme arm in warfare. Italy will have 10,000 entirely new ones at the end of the year (1936). Our strength cannot be more than 1,500 within the next twelve months. Verb. Sap.

So little comfort was it to me to reflect on our own programme with which we were supposed to be getting on well that on April 3rd 1936 I had published in *The Daily Mail* a leading article headed "Progressive Inferiority," from which this is an extract :—

"The paltry air programme which the Government have in hand means that with the lapse of time Great Britain will be in a position of progressive inferiority—worse a year hence than six months hence; still worse at the end of 1937.

"Italy is expanding her air fleet with terrific speed. Her Air Under-Secretary, General Valle, only last Sunday stated that she could count at that moment on 10,000 military pilots, and that work in her aircraft factories was proceeding night and day in three shifts.

"He refused to give the exact strength, but it was announced in Rome on February 24th that by the close of 1936 she will have 5,500 new machines, a considerable proportion of which will be of high-speed bombing type with 2,000 miles range.

"As for Germany, she is admitted to have 500 aerodromes, so that if she be given only twenty machines

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per aerodrome she would have 10,000. Shrewd observers, however, calculate that she may very likely have 25,000. Such figures show the ridiculous—and extremely perilous—position of inferiority into which Britain has got herself.

"In an attempt to palliate this weakness, the British Government has issued absurd statements as to the German strength. On March 14th official figures placed the number of German "first-line aircraft" at only 700.

"In this estimate, and in the credence which it appears to attach to reported unsatisfactory tests of German machines and failure of German pilots, it has shown itself the ready dupe of clever propaganda."

This broadside I followed by another about a week later :—

"In Italy and Germany the air factories are working day and night. Six months ago, according to American newspapers, Italy was building every day ten aeroplanes of great speed, range and carrying capacity. The rhythm of Italian production is increasing. Signor Mussolini told his Cabinet on Wednesday that the Italian air force is "growing from week to week."

"Details of German rearmaments are shrouded in secrecy, but it is known that she already possesses colossal air fleets. Some months ago General Goering, explaining that he had been entrusted by his Leader with the task of building up Germany's air force, said : 'I never do things by halves.'

"These words from the lips of the capable and energetic German Air Minister have been translated into deeds. Under his programme Germany was to have had 87,000 aeroplanes, all of the newest type by the end of 1935.

"There is every reason to believe that this programme, at least, has been fulfilled, and that since that date the total number of aeroplanes has rapidly increased. It has been estimated that some fifty new aeroplanes, all of the most modern design, are added to Germany's air fleet daily.

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> " Great Britain should not waste a moment in repairing the inadequacy of her own air force. Nothing less is required than a revival of the drive and activity of our air production in the last years of the war. At that period we were turning out over 2,000 machines a month. That is the minimum figure to be aimed at to-day.
>
> " We have the finest air pilots in the world, with a human reservoir of incalculable proportions from which to select men of skill and courage. Our designers and engineers are unsurpassed. . . ."

In writing thus about our designers and engineers, the paper was on safe and tested ground. They had recently shown their superior skill by an achievement to which I propose to devote a short separate chapter—the achievement of creating and building the machine known as the " Britain First."

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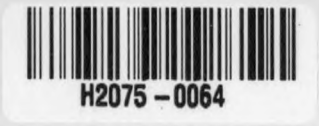
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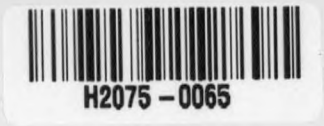
CHAPTER FOUR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CHAPTER FOUR

THE building, and fate, of the "Britain First" is an episode in my career about which I am unashamedly—and, as I think, justifiably—pleased.

While the Continental nations were making such rapid strides in both commercial and military aeroplane construction, I could not believe that our own laggard progress was the fault of any lack of technical mastery in our own craftsmen. I determined on a private test.

As will have been realised, I had followed closely the progress of flying throughout the world, particularly the swift building of the air fleet in Germany, of which Herr Hitler made the world aware in 1934. The study of technical publications and the advice of skilled technicians had kept me informed of the latest improvements in design.

I invited to visit me representatives of the chief aerial engineering firms in Britain, and asked them why the British aircraft industry did not beat the performances of foreign countries. I was told that in Britain there was no one to put up the money for building a civil aircraft of extreme performance.

One expert told me that the orders of the Air Ministry for new designs of military machines stipulated many requirements which it sometimes took years to satisfy.

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Before the final approval was given to these orders, other countries had evolved better machines.

I offered to find the money for any company which cared to fulfil my requirements for a machine that should be the best of its type in the world.

The Bristol Aeroplane Company accepted those conditions. With energy and skill their designers set to work. Within a year the machine was delivered.

When it was ready the Air Ministry asked if the Royal Air Force might test it. The best R.A.F. pilots took up the machine, which had been christened the "Britain First," at the testing aerodrome at Martlesham. They formed the very highest opinion of its handling qualities in the air and its general excellence for military purposes.

The Ministry was so impressed by the reports of these pilots that a request was made that the machine might be used for a still longer period—that it might be used as a prototype in anticipation of the adoption of the same kind of machine on a large scale.

Upon this, in the name of *The Daily Mail*, I at once offered to present the aeroplane to the Royal Air Force as a gift. My offer was accepted.

During the various negotiations about the "Britain First" there occurred a not unhumorous incident, which was duly reported.

SPEED SURPRISE FOR AIR OFFICIALS

"A novel demonstration has just been given of the remarkable speed of 'Britain First.'

"The pilot had an appointment with important officials at an aerodrome fifty miles away. The meeting was fixed for 11 a.m.

"At 10.45 a.m. he telephoned to enquire the time of

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THE "BRITAIN FIRST"

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the meeting. He was told that it was due to begin in fifteen minutes, and was severely taken to task for being fifty miles away.

" The pilot, knowing that he had ' Britain First ' waiting to take the air outside his office, smiled to himself and humbly remarked that he was sorry, but he would do his best to be present as soon as possible.

" Thirteen minutes later he stepped out of ' Britain First ' on the aerodrome where the meeting was to be held, with two minutes to spare. He had selected this method of demonstrating the remarkable speed of this bomber to the officials with whom he was to hold conference."

The building of the " Britain First " conclusively showed that our lack of efficient modern bombers was not because we couldn't make them, but because we wouldn't make them.

The acceptance of this prototype machine by the Government had speedy and good results. *The Daily Mail* was able to report on August 16th 1935 that :

" Further details are now available of the plans for the construction of new war-'planes and aerodromes to fulfil the first section of the Royal Air Force expansion programme. One of the most important contracts is for the military version of ' Britain First.' It is powered by two 645-h.p. Mercury engines.

" In civil form ' Britain First ' has reached a speed of 260 an hour with a full load, or 40 m.p.h. more than the fastest American twin-engined transport aeroplanes.

" This machine has been chosen by the Air Ministry for its remarkable performance as a suitable type to put into the Service as a medium bomber. Tests have been completed at Farnborough by the technical experts of the R.A.F., and a development order has been placed with the Bristol Company for bomber versions. The company has been informed that ultimately it may be expected to build at least 150 of the machines, and possibly 200."

The military type developed from the " Britain First " was christened the Blenheim Bomber. Adapted for its fighting uses, the design underwent several changes. When the King toured the military aerodromes in July 1936 the Spitfire Fighter and the Blenheim Bomber were selected for flying exhibitions. Of the Blenheim it was then reported :—

> " It is a mid-wing, all-metal, twin-engined monoplane. Now in production, it is reputed to be the fastest bomber in the world. This indicates that her speed must exceed 300 m.p.h. The actual figure is a guarded secret."

Military historians will, surely, draw unpleasant lessons from the fact that it was left to a civilian enthusiast to inspire and provide what was to prove such a striking addition to our national defences.

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CHAPTER FIVE

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CHAPTER FIVE

In the earliest days of my campaign for vigorous re-armament in the air, to protect us from dangers that were already visible and others that I foresaw as almost inevitable, I was well aware of one central weakness.

Statesmen are fond of saying that no Government can move far in advance of public opinion, and public opinion is not easy to change. But that was not the weakness that I most feared.

By stating and re-stating, iterating and reiterating, even to the points of exasperation and weariness, the facts as I knew them, I had some hope that an ever-widening circle of people would share my alarm and would eventually cause Ministers to shake off their complacency and take action.

It was obvious, however, to one old in experience of public agitation, that before really effective action would be taken, a flaw in our Governmental machine needed repair.

This view I stated at length when I found that my efforts were finding some response from the public which I was able directly to address.

On March 29th 1934 in *The Daily Mail* I wrote :—

WANTED—AN AIR DICTATOR

"That the country is aroused to the air-danger my post-bag proves. The public discerns more clearly

than the politicians how defenceless Britain is against the new weapon which will dominate the warfare of the future.

"As Wing-Commander G. W. Williamson, of the Air Ministry, said last week in a lecture to the Royal United Service Institution :—

"'*Even before we read that war has been declared, London will have been invaded by high-speed bombers flying through the night at high altitudes.*'

"The nation knows that to be bombed in its beds is the price it may have to pay for neglect of reasonable precautions now. With some alarm it has seen in the new Service Estimates, £3,000,000 more allotted to the Navy, £1,700,000 more allotted to the Army, and a mere £135,000 more allotted to the Air Force, when every schoolboy knows that enemy raiders can reach London in half an hour from the Continent, and that every factory, railway junction, naval base and commercial port in the kingdom is within the radius of their destroying action.

"My correspondents fall into two main categories—technical experts who tell me that the peril is even greater than I have depicted it, and the ordinary man and woman in the street, who echo that eternal and ineffective cry of a democratically governed people: 'Why isn't something done about it?'

"To that question there is a plain answer: 'Because no one is responsible.'

"The Prime Minister, in the House of Commons last week, described the organisation upon which the protection of this country from enemy attack depends. It took him more than half an hour to expound the confused and incoherent system whose operations since the war have reduced us from first air-Power in the world to sixth—or is it seventh?—and have placed us at the mercy of any neighbour who cares to attack us. It consists, according to Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, of :—

The Cabinet.
The Committee of Imperial Defence.

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Its various sub-Committees.
The Chiefs of Staffs of the three Services.
The Service Department of the Treasury.
The Defence of India Sub-Committee.
The Man-Power Committee.
The Contracts Co-ordinating Committee.
The Principal Supply Officers' Committee.
The Air Board Committee;
—and so forth.

"Such is the many-jointed backbone of Britain's national defence. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's main claim was that it is 'flexible.' That may not be the ideal quality in a backbone, but from the political and bureaucratic point of view this chaotic concatenation of committees secures three highly desirable conditions :—

1. Maximum of talk; minimum of action.
2. Unlimited possibilities of obstruction.
3. Complete exemption from responsibility for every individual and coterie concerned.

"How could the Air Force, with all the vested interests and social influence of the two older Services working against it, hope to make good its vital but unfamiliar claims among this welter of competing authorities?

"No ordinary Air Minister can fulfil this task. Discouraged by the hesitations of colleagues in the Cabinet, obstructed by the technical objections of subordinates in his Department, he is a prisoner of the system, and though nominally responsible, is actually powerless.

"To create the Air Force that we need requires the same determination, breadth of view and infectious energy as Mr. Lloyd George imparted to the manufacture of munitions during the war. If we cannot find these, and make Britain safe from overhead destruction, then we might as well scrap the Navy, disband the Army and throw ourselves on the mercy of the world.

"We must get someone to do for Britain what General Goering is doing for Germany.

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"He must be a man of proved executive ability in high office, with abundant strength of will to overcome the inertia and obstruction of politicians and public servants, and with sufficient technical knowledge of aerial matters to act energetically from the first day of his appointment.

"To such a man complete power, financial as well as administrative, should be given throughout the entire sphere of aerial defence. He will require a free hand to spend money without interference from the Treasury or from the House of Commons until Britain has been made completely secure in the air.

"The choice of the right man would be one of the most important decisions ever taken in our history. I believe he is in our midst.

"Britain's aerial defence would be in strong hands if it were confided to the unhampered control of Sir Eric Geddes, the chairman of Imperial Airways, Ltd.

"As Director-General of Transportation and First Lord of the Admiralty during the war, he had, at a comparatively early age, abundant experience of national responsibilities. His chairmanship of the Committee on National Expenditure, appointed at the end of 1921 to curb the reckless extravagance which was a legacy of the war, proved his capacity to check and control those assertive, adroit and anonymous officials of Whitehall who maintain a stealthy stranglehold on many Ministers. As chairman for the past ten years of Imperial Airways he has raised British civilian flying to the highest degree of safety and efficiency.

"Unless authority over them is concentrated in one powerful personality, our air defences will continue to lag behind the needs of national safety, and disaster will continue to lurk behind a screen of eyewash and reassuring statement.

"Suave politicians and glib departmental bureaucrats will never give us the strong, swift action required to repair half a generation's neglect of our air resources.

"We need an Air Dictator. We have the man. Let us use his leadership to save the country from certain calamity."

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That appeal remained unanswered. Neither Sir Eric Geddes nor any other of his type was given sufficient power to make our progress towards aerial safety anything but the tragic hoax that I had named it in my letters to the Prime Minister and his colleagues.

Among the other continuing weaknesses was that to which I called attention in a leading article, already mentioned in Chapter Two, called :—

WANTED 10,000 AEROPLANES.

In that article, published as long ago as May 14th 1935, I was able to say with complete conviction :—

> " The existing programme is now admitted by all to be completely insufficient. It adds only some hundreds of machines where foreign Powers are adding thousands.
>
> " We need 10,000 aeroplanes, and there is every reason why the Government should take the powers necessary for the construction of such a fleet with all possible energy and expedition. . . .
>
> " In the British force of 10,000 machines, *the number of types* ought to be strictly limited. Three, or, better still, two should suffice—the most powerful bomber and the fastest and most formidable fighter. An air fleet of multifarious specimens is necessarily weakened by over-specialisation. Mass production can be carried out much more easily and rapidly where the types are few ; and mass production is essential both for speed and cheapness."

Almost four years later to the day, May 13th 1938, I was still publicly bewailing our mistaken policy of accumulating an air fleet of multifarious specimens. Discussing some information about German aerial progress, I commented :—

> " I do not repeat this opinion as a reflection upon our British aircraft, but I would suggest to the inner circle of

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the Cabinet that they issue peremptory instructions that Service orders for new 'planes be limited to four types at most. Germany, I believe, has only three types.

"An air force with a large number of types of plane cannot, in any circumstances, operate successfully in war. Confusion at the onset of hostilities would soon resolve into chaos.

"What would be said of a great land Army which took the field with twenty different types of machine-gun or field-gun. Its defeat would be sure."

Before making public my apprehension about the confused state of our Air Force in its multiplicity of types, I had endeavoured to secure action in the matter by a private appeal to powerful Ministers. It was as far back as October 5th 1934 that I wrote a letter to the present Prime Minister—and there is no better man—in the course of which I remarked that:—

"In England to-day we have less than 500 aeroplanes, consisting, I believe, of seventeen different makes, some of them entirely obsolescent and others only useful for training purposes. . . ."

Eventually I inspired a Member of Parliament to ask the Minister concerned about this unnecessary and fatal multiplicity of types. The answer was that we had not seventeen different types—but twenty-four!

The necessity of reducing the number of types of war-'plane must surely be obvious to anyone who has ever had to do with training men, as well as to anyone who has ever had to handle implements of war. Uniformity of training, the easy supply and attachment of spare parts and replacement parts—these are matters of vital importance in modern war, when casualties in both men and material are rapid and many. To expect

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a force to act as a trained body of technicians when some have learnt their rudiments upon one machine and some on another, and to expect such a force to be quickly repaired after damage when the things needed must be of different kinds for different small sections of it, is to expect the impossible.

In one of our campaigns the War Office was capable of sending out a consignment of boots, all of which were for the left foot. Imagination boggles at what might happen if a score of different kinds of 'plane had to be serviced by some harassed Department.

This particular weakness in our Air Force, as well as its inadequacy, was to be traced to the prime fault upon which I laid a finger in March 1934. It was due to a lack of unified control. It was due to that distressing spectacle which we saw in the full light between the Conferences of Godesberg and Munich—the democracies' hurried, huddled, scrambling endeavours to rearm without the guidance of a single will and purpose.

Just how remote from the reality and the true need was the political mind was shown when, at length, the Government was stirred to some show of action, and a Minister for Co-ordination was appointed.

The real need was, I am still convinced, for an air dictator. The second best would have been a man highly skilled in the ordering and supervision of supplies for all arms, determined to be the arbiter between the three fighting services.

For such a post a man would obviously need not only wide powers, but special characteristics. A youthful acquaintance with modern armaments would be an advantage. A long and detailed knowledge of business

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methods applied to the mass production and quick delivery of highly technical supplies would also be an advantage.

The man who was appointed was an elderly lawyer.

With Sir Thomas Inskip I have every sympathy. For his rugged sincerity of purpose and for his career, I have every respect. He is a great patriot. But a man whose life had moved sedately through a succession of academic distinctions to a good practice at the Bar, could not hope to discharge for Britain those functions which were being discharged in Germany by a man of the type and training of Field-Marshal Goering. His replacement by Lord Chatfield was an admission of this.

One result of such an appointment as that of Sir Thomas to duties for which his career could not possibly have trained him was that when the Godesberg crisis broke it found Britain palpably unready, and Parliament much concerned with a supposed threat by the Government to take legal action against a Member who had exposed our lack of anti-air raid defences.

It is folly to blame the man. It is the system which is to blame, that system, which, as I have written, lacks the guidance of a single will and purpose.

The lack of such guidance drives deeper than our failure to rearm adequately in the air.

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CHAPTER SIX

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CHAPTER SIX

WHEN the various letters and articles from which I have quoted were written and published, my gloomy prognostications about the coming change in the diplomatic and military status of Britain and Germany were ridiculed.

The German declaration of rearmament in the teeth of the Treaty of Versailles, the re-entry into the Rhinelands, the re-nationalisation of German waterways were treated by Ministers of State and members of the public with extraordinary complacency. Not until Signor Mussolini had shaken all confidence in 'collective security' and Herr Hitler had attached to the Reich both Austria and a large part of Czecho-Slovakia, and had threatened the British Empire with war in the process, did my prophecies of 1933 and 1934 cease to be derided.

When Herr Hitler took open power in the January of 1933, I realised that his psychology was very different from that of our own statesmen and very different from that of the men who had led the German republic.

Here was a man whose life had been *hard*. In boyhood and youth he had been poor and thwarted. In early manhood he had been a serving soldier performing the most dangerous of front-line tasks, those of a battalion runner. He had been decorated for gallantry, had been wounded and gassed. In the years of later manhood

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he, with other ex-servicemen, had seen his country thrust down into the very mud of world disrepute. He had suffered from the ineptitude of those charged with the Government of his country. He had been affronted by the spectacle of members of an alien race flourishing in Germany and Austria while his own countrymen were in penury. He had attained power only by the use of force combined with a new application of rhetorical and propagandist powers.

This man, I *knew*, would not consent to wait patiently upon the whims and ideologies of Geneva for the restoration to his country of what he thought were her national rights. The redress of injustices would not be, for him, a matter of dancing attendance cap in hand, as Bruning had done, at Whitehall or the Quai d'Orsay.

Since he had from the beginning of his perilous political career denounced any loyalty to the forced Treaty of Versailles, I *knew* that no paper bond would withhold him, and his equally resolute and bitter comrades, from giving Germany back her arms and restoring that high military *moral* which had made her so formidable before and during the last war.

At the moment of his accession Britain and her Allies had alternatives before them. They could have armed strongly and rapidly and so have overawed the new Germany. They could have recognised the portent of Hitler, and with frank goodwill have endeavoured to give his country that redress which he sought, and which he had promised to his followers.

They did neither. Britain remained indolent about her arms, and at the same time treated the Hitler régime to exhibitions of scorn in its early days and vituperation

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and denunciation in its later days. The British policy seemed to combine a determination not to provide adequate means of war while taking every pains to provoke it.

Could there be folly more stupendous!

Britain's task, then, was twofold. She had to rearm rapidly against possible attack from exasperated and well-armed neighbours. She had, at the same time, to try to understand those neighbours and endeavour to co-operate with them in removing all causes of conflict.

By one section of the community one part of this policy was called "war-mongering," and the other part was called "pro-Nazism." Both parts were in reality a policy of Peace.

While Germany was actually getting into her first swing of rearmament, the "disarmament" section of the British public was growing more than ever vocal.

Germany, with justice, felt that she had been tricked at Versailles. She had been forcibly disarmed on the pretext that this was the first step towards world disarmament. Britain, it is true, was equally duped. She did enter upon fifteen fateful years of disarming. But France from the very days the various peace treaties were signed encouraged a mass of small States to arm vigorously. The result was that Germany five years after Versailles found round her a stouter ring of steel than that around her five years before the Great War.

It was inevitable that any German régime which denounced the *diktat* of Versailles would arm heavily at the first chance. It was obvious that their arms must be—diplomatically if not actually—directed against the Versailles Powers. With these things in mind, one could

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only see the British " disarmament-pacifist " school as a kind of national suicide club. That was how I saw it.

I wrote in *The Daily Mail* of November 17th 1933 this article :—

THE PERILS OF PINHEAD PACIFISM.

" Emboldened by their illusion that this country is safe from foreign attack, ignorant and self-satisfied agitators are clamouring for the British Government to continue its dangerous policy of disarmament.

" They cling to the imbecile belief that war, which has existed since humanity began, and looms so largely on the international horizon to-day, can be prevented by pacifist ' gestures.' They might just as sensibly try to pacify a Bengal tiger by blowing kisses to it.

" Two kinds of people are prominent in this agitation. One is drawn from those intellectual prigs whose overweening conceit in their own wisdom and virtue is equalled only by their blindness to hard facts. The other consists of their well-meaning but sentimental and simple dupes.

" These noisy and misguided zealots start with a false assumption that those who realise more clearly than they the danger in which this country stands are animated by some sinister desire for another war. They like to feel that they are crusaders against the powers of darkness. They adopt towards the question of national defence the attitude that is known in America as ' holier-than-thou.'

" If their knowledge of history and present-day international politics were a little less elementary, they would realise that the opponents of premature disarmament are working for the very aim which they themselves profess—the preservation of world-peace. The further reduction of British forces, ' as an example to the rest of the world,' will no more achieve this end than the disbandment of the London police would abolish crime in the metropolis. The truth is just the contrary. Disarmament means war.

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" Our pinhead pacifists, on the other hand, are constantly working up that kind of spirit between the nations of Europe which is liable to culminate in conflict. Their reckless insults to the rulers of Germany, their insolent criticism of matters which are purely the private concern of the German people, will end inevitably, if they are not stopped, in raising the resentment of that country to explosion point.

" Should such grotesque and impudent tomfoolery as the ' trial ' of the Reichstag Fire case recently organised in London by the ' World Committee on German Fascism ' ever be repeated when Germany has recovered her military strength, it might well be made a pretext for war by that proud and susceptible nation.

" These self-appointed mentors of Germany forget that men like Hitler and General Goering, to whom they address their rebukes and remonstrances, are fighters and ruthless patriots. They have proved their soldierly qualities in actual war. Such men are not to be turned from their purposes by a barrage of mere words. Those purposes they have proclaimed to be peaceful. Our pacifists should beware lest Germany grows strong again, and their constant scolding changes that intention.

" We who live in Britain know how negligible the hysterical screamers who rant in the Albert Hall about alleged German outrages or at the Oxford Union about disarmament really are. Outside this country, however, they produce an effect out of all proportion to their insignificance. In an Empire like ours, which has charge of many native races still in a backward state of civilisation, and which marches, on the North-West Frontier of India and elsewhere, with warlike races envious of our possessions, it is perilous folly to allow a morbid and anæmic minority of our population to spread the impression that Britain has lost her virility and self-respect.

" The British public treats its puling pacifists with characteristic tolerance and contempt. We know that the Oxford undergraduates who vote against fighting for King and country and flaunt white feathers in their buttonholes are little more than excited schoolboys showing off to the public. If the need for their services

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were ever to arise, 90 per cent. of them would come forward as eagerly as their predecessors did nineteen years ago. But, trivial as these demonstrations are, we must not forget that they do incalculable harm to British prestige abroad, and encourage all the latent hostilities which surround our Empire.

" ' Be strong. Strength means peace,' said Marshal Lyautey last Monday to the French Boy Scouts at Strasbourg.

" In contacts that I have had with masters at some of our great Public Schools and with the younger dons at the Universities, I have not infrequently been struck by the defeatist and drawing-room Bolshevist views that they express. Though these may only be part of a pose intended to convey an impression of intellectual superiority, it is regrettable that the men who are charged with the education of British youth should profess such unworthy opinions. Most of them owe their bread and butter to the wealth accumulated in the past through the expansion of the Empire they affect to despise.

" Although in this country we dislike the idea of inquiring into a man's political opinions, those who have the appointment of the instructors of the younger generation should insist that their influence shall be used to encourage ideals of good citizenship, and not the perverted and pernicious theories of a false internationalism.

" Much less tolerance can be shown to newspapers which, while making pretentious claims to national responsibility, encourage these dangerous habits of thought. A year or two ago the same organs were fawning upon the anti-British agitator Gandhi. Now that this vain mountebank is discredited, even with his own credulous followers, they are employing their mischievous activities in baiting Germany, and with quite unconscious inconsistency, bleating for a further weakening of Britain's powers of self-defence.

" The fact recorded by the military historian Tacitus 1,800 years ago still holds good, that ' the peace of nations cannot be secured without arms.'

" Defencelessness against air attack is a direct incite-

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ment to the aggression of more energetic Powers. If the risks we are at present running were properly understood, there would be such a peremptory national demand for an adequate British Air Force as no Government could resist.

"Is it realised that our present inferiority lays open such densely populated areas as Tyneside—that great centre of Socialist pacifism—to the possibility of complete destruction, with immense loss of human life, in the course of a single summer evening by aeroplanes already in the possession of Germany?

"The fastest type of German commercial aircraft is known as the Heinkel 70, and is capable of being transformed in a few hours into a bombing machine. Quite recently one of these aeroplanes flew from Berlin to Seville —1,832 miles—in eight hours, and at an average of about 230 miles an hour. From Hamburg to Newcastle-on-Tyne is only 422 miles, so that it would be perfectly possible for a squadron of Heinkel bombers to make two raids on Tyneside from Germany within eight hours, at a speed which would enable them to leave far behind the few 'interceptor fighters' of our insignificant Home Defence Air Force, whose maximum speed is given as only 207 miles an hour.

"That is one of the plain facts which have completely altered the whole situation of this country as regards national defence. Our duty is to face these facts.

"Let us put aside sloppy sentimentalism and the vain illusion that for the first time in man's long history human nature has finally forsaken war. The day for beating the sword into the ploughshare has not yet come.

"Until it does we must pay heed to the precept implied in the motto of the Honourable Artillery Company—that fine corps of young Londoners who set so splendid an example to our neurotic pacifist youth. It reads: 'Arma pacis fulcra—Arms are the basis of Peace.'"

The pinhead pacifists against whom nearly six years ago I was writing are still with us. They have learnt nothing.

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For some years I was a Governor of a certain school in London. During the rearmament campaign, when the Government had at long last begun to speak of the danger to Britain of inadequate defences, I offered to pay for the equipment for this school of a Cadet Corps. The reception of my offer will be deduced from the following letter that I felt compelled to write to the headmaster last year :—

April 6th 1938.

"DEAR SIR,

"I note that the L.C.C. has once more refused to allow any of the schools under its control to establish a cadet corps.

"With the views that I hold it is impossible for me to be associated with a school or any other educational body which has not, as one of its primary purposes, the wish and the will to help in every possible way the cause of national defence.

"Will you, therefore, kindly record my resignation as a Governor of the St. Marylebone Grammar School ?

"In taking this action, I do so with much regret,

"Yours very faithfully,

"ROTHERMERE."

Not only are these Pinheads still with us, and still in control of many of our local governing bodies, but they still try to perform their second deadly function of

". . . working up that kind of spirit between the nations of Europe which is liable to culminate in conflict. Their reckless insults to the rulers of Germany, their insolent criticism of matters which are purely the private concern of the German people, will end inevitably, if they are not stopped, in raising the resentment of that country to explosion point."

It is not uncommon to find in the Left-wing Press references to Herr Hitler's "lunacy" and his "illusion of grandeur."

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In what does this fancied lunacy and illusion of grandeur consist? In the fact that Herr Hitler and his immediate colleagues have raised Germany from the poverty, ignominy and disruption in which they found her in 1933 to a position of European dominance? In the fact that instead of some 67,000,000 impoverished Germans occupying 183,381 square miles there are now over 79,000,000 Germans occupying without unemployment 227,750 square miles. In the fact that Germany from the disgrace of defeat in 1918 had risen to a commanding position in the councils of the world in 1938, with the Treaty that bound her to degradation torn up for ever.

Britain may not like this change. Few Englishmen ousted from their own old command of world affairs can like it. But it is the very antithesis of lunacy. It is no illusion of grandeur. It *is* grandeur. It is like saying that some heavy-weight boxer who has got himself into perfect form has an illusion of grandeur when he knocks over the ropes some blustering antagonist who has allowed himself to grow stale.

It would certainly be the height of suicidal mania to tell such a heavy-weight that he had attained to his status by the simple process of being a certifiable lunatic with an illusion of grandeur if oneself were without any means of self-defence.

If there has been any certifiable lunacy anywhere in Europe, it has surely been among those who have steadily deprived themselves of arms as a preliminary to taunting with the grossest insults well-armed men who already feel themselves deeply wronged.

One thing is quite certain—that if any portion of the pictorial and written abuse which has been directed at

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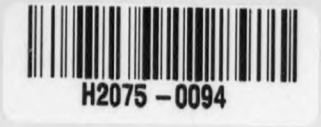
the heads of the German and Italian States had been levelled, let us say, against President Roosevelt, the most immediate diplomatic retaliation would have been suffered by Britain.

The habit of jeering at and reviling these heads of other nations was acquired when both Italy and Germany were still weak, or supposed to be still weak. It is a legacy of the early days when Herr Hitler was mistaken by our ignorant and naïve publicists for a political Charlie Chaplin, and Signor Mussolini was supposed to be a kind of comic opera clown. It was ill mannered then : it is both ill mannered and dangerous now.

This misconception was at its height in 1935, when Signor Mussolini, despairing of any results from appeals to Geneva, launched his Abyssinian campaign.

This campaign was a perfect demonstration of the inability of those in command of our Foreign Office and intelligence departments to grasp elementary facts and to draw from them simple conclusions. As such it deserves separate attention.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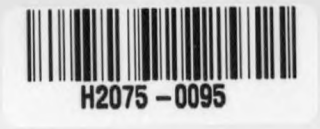
CHAPTER SEVEN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CHAPTER SEVEN

THE Italo-Ethiopian campaign was responsible for more confusion of thought in Britain than any other episode in living memory.

It gave rise to the extraordinary spectacle of Archbishops and Bishops rallying together to harangue masses of ignorant sentimentalists in support of the most notorious nation of brutal slave-traders in the world.

It showed a British Cabinet vainly trying to harness the non-existent—or, at least, non-responsive—forces of the League of Nations in defence of a nation against whose admission to that very League Britain had herself protested on the score that it was a barbaric conglomeration of tribes whose nominal head was in no position to fulfil his obligations.

It showed, indeed, many another anomaly of which history will take satirical account.

At the outset of the episode there were clearly two separate considerations involved. One was where justice might lie in the prolonged dispute that had come to the arbitrament of arms. The other was whether Italy was able to beat the Abyssinians.

Both of these were widely discussed at that time. With the first I shall deal, briefly, a little later in these pages. The second now seems such a palpable absurdity

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that it is hard to recapture the angry moods of 1935, when the public believed with great military " experts " and statesmen that the best for which Signor Mussolini might hope was a long, dragging, four-year campaign, and that the most likely result would be that the Italian legions would be " bogged " in Ethiopian swamps, drowned by the much threatened rains, and finally massacred by the " righteous " hordes of the Negus.

My own conviction and prediction, published through *The Daily Mail*, was that Italy would defeat the Abyssinians within half a year.

The actual campaign in Ethiopia did not begin until the summer of 1935, after the diplomatic breakdown in August following the abortive meeting of the League Council in July. To a mind not blinded by " wishful-thinking " it was obvious from the beginning of the year that conflict must come. From the early spring I saw to it that the newspapers associated with my name did not leave their readers under the happy illusion that Italy could be bluffed out of Abyssinia, or that, once in that country, she would be very long withheld from a decisive conquest.

Even as late as the September a *New Statesman* pamphlet on Abyssinia gravely said :—

> " The duration of the war is reckoned by Italian military experts at two years : by most foreign experts at at least four years, followed by guerrilla fighting for an indefinite period."

A very celebrated General who had been out with the Italian army as an observer submitted to me, in the middle of the campaign, a lengthy memorandum conclusively proving that Italy was doomed to defeat by

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Abyssinian conditions, and later demonstrated to me and a number of guests round my table that in such a country the aeroplane and the tank must be ineffective instruments.

The reasoning behind my conviction that Italy must win, and win soon, was simple. Signor Mussolini had raised a highly efficient technical army. He had thoroughly prepared for the virtually inevitable war. Facing his troops, with their modern aeroplanes, light tanks, tractors and lorries, would be masses of ill-disciplined, ill-trained, unshod, ignorant, savage warriors. If the bombers could not, because of the formation of the rocky, mountainous country, reach their maximum effect on human targets, they would certainly play havoc with the herds upon which so many of the Ethiopian tribesmen depended for food.

There was also a moral factor, and, on the much-quoted adage of Napoleon, in war the moral to the physical is as three is to one. Italy was a rejuvenated and unified nation, burning to avenge the unspeakable atrocities which the Abyssinians had inflicted upon her soldiers at Adowa some forty years earlier. Her troops were anxious to display their prowess and endurance to the Duce. The Abyssinians, on the contrary, were a loose conglomeration of tribes, many of them in perpetual half-rebellion against the nominal " Emperor," who was, by many of them, regarded as a murderous usurper.

Many of those who regarded my forecast of a short campaign as unsound were undoubtedly affected by their belief, or hope, that Italy would not be permitted by other Powers to make a conquest. Here, again, there

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were two considerations involved. One was whether other Powers had a right to take measures against Italy. The other was, if they had that right, had they adequate means. The British Government, as represented by Mr. Eden, strove to establish the right, and failed most ignominiously to find the means.

For some reason the British public in 1935 were allowed to believe that after the Walwal incident, Signor Mussolini moved troops to Abyssinia and began an aggressive war, in the face of any obligation Italy might have under the Covenant of the League, which is, as is well known, the first part of the Treaty of Versailles, which Italy as a victor had signed. The calendar of events tells a very different story. The Walwal incident took place on December 5th 1934. It was virtually a year before the League of Nations reported upon it. Over eight months passed before the actual war began. *It was not Abyssinia, but Italy, whose nationals had been wantonly attacked, which was the original aggrieved party to the dispute.* Ten years earlier Britain had sought Italian support in a project to build a barrage on the Abyssinian Lake Tana, offering in return to support an Italian claim to a railway through that same country; Abyssinia had referred the British proposal to the League of Nations, and Britain had immediately whittled down the project to escape the consideration of Geneva. At a Conference held at Stresa, Mr. MacDonald had abstained from even warning the Italians that strong action in Abyssinia over the repeated attacks by the tribesmen would be regarded seriously by Britain. Italy had thus been led to expect that, just as the Lake Tana and Gondar incidents had been settled without

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recourse to the League, so the Walwal incident could be settled.

It was, in view of these things, quite a rational assumption by Italy that if the other Powers thought they had a theoretic right of interference, they had tacitly by their own conduct voided it.

For Great Britain, who had wilfully reduced her arms for fifteen years, the second consideration was the more important. Even if there was a right to take measures against Italy, was there the means ?

Pinhead pacifists had screamed for more and more reductions in arms. Their screamings had been listened to with full attention. The only means of taking measures against Italy lay in what was optimistically known as ' collective security.' In hard fact ' collective security ' meant this : there were represented at Geneva a number of small nations led in their deliberations by Russia, France and Britain. Outside Geneva, and antagonistic to the League, stood Japan and Germany, both heavily armed, and the United States, sworn to a policy of ' neutrality ' which meant a policy of non-intervention in European affairs. Italy was technically a member of the League, but was in revolt against it. Against a well-armed group, consisting of Japan, Germany and Italy, it was thus proposed to mobilise, for either economic or military force, a jumble of small States many of whom were the friends and clients of Germany; France, which was in the first throes of economic difficulty and apparent political disruption; Russia, whose strength was doubtful and whose own solidity was questionable; and Britain, whose arms had been reduced to futility and whose economic recovery from a major slump was

capable of setback by almost any interruption to world trade.

In addition to these material factors was the moral factor that Britain and France had been taught to regard war as 'unthinkable' after the war to end war. Italy and Germany had been re-taught the lessons of an earlier generation. They believed with Napoleon that God is on the side of the big battalions. They believed with Cæsar's legions that it is sweet and glorious to die for one's country. The so-called Democratic States had been rendered soft-fibred. The Dictatorships were high-mettled.

To ignore these things was not patriotic or brave, but merely foolish. To recognise them was not unpatriotic or defeatist, but the necessary result of honestly facing facts and their implication. If there were any lack of patriotism it was in those who, knowing the truth, endeavoured to direct Britain into a policy which the truth stamped as fatuous at best and fatal at worst.

The world had already had one or two pitiable exhibitions of how impotent was the truncated League of Nations in the face of nations able to fight and intent upon pursuing their own will. It had not been able to prevent or punish Germany for putting a new Jackboot through the Treaty of Versailles. It had not been able to prevent China's invasion by Japan. It had not even been able to prevent two South American Republics, of no size or genuine world importance, from conducting a long-dragging war.

There was no reason whatsover for supposing that, having failed in these tests, the League would miraculously be able to apply pressure to Italy and bring her to sub-

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jection to the Genevan ideology, particularly as Italy could well count upon the aid of Germany and Japan, and would be able to import from the American Continent.

It was distressing to men of high pacific ideals that this should be so, but it was so.

On the grounds that I have just set out as briefly as possible, I concluded that any attempt to impose Sanctions on Italy must fail. I saw also, very vividly, that such an attempt would expose to the world the terrible fact that Britain, whose word had once been decisive in European politics, was no longer the arbiter of conduct. For Italy to laugh at a menace inspired by Britain would be fatal to our prestige and of enormous encouragement to the Totalitarian States. Sanctions would bitterly offend Italy, a nation which had been one of our stoutest Allies. They would complete the work of disrupting the old Allies of the Great War, that disruptive process which began when Japan had been similarly antagonised.

Because of these convictions, the papers whose policies I directed were from the first strongly against the whole policy of Sanctions. They applauded the present Premier, Mr. Chamberlain, when he called that policy the very midsummer of madness. They preached from the very start of the conflict that truth which Mr. Eden himself eventually had to formulate towards the end of the sorry episode—that there are only two kinds of Sanctions, the ineffective economic sanctions that are not worth putting on, and the military sanctions which must mean war.

Every prediction I made, every warning I uttered about Sanctions proved one hundred per cent. right. Italy did laugh at them, and proceeded in a very few months

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to roll up the Abyssinian resistance. The weakness of Britain was exposed. Italy, affronted by her old Ally, formed with Germany the Rome–Berlin axis, which speedily became the Rome–Berlin–Tokio axis. Seeing Britain's wishes set at naught, smaller communities took their tone from Italy in 1935, so that even the insurgent General Franco, to whom Britain refused belligerent rights, was encouraged to treat British diplomatic queries and rebukes with open contempt. Seeing Britain's prestige so low, Japan in 1937 and 1938 treated British protests and British representatives and British troops and the British flag with arrogance, contumely and contempt.

"But yesterday the word of Cæsar might have stood against the world: now . . . none so poor to do him reverence." That was the only fitting inscription for the doors of the British Foreign Office after the policy of Sanctions had been launched and had failed.

I say again that British policy at the time of the Abyssinian campaign was politically a blunder of the worst possible kind, and was morally a mistake which is already having the most devastating effects upon the future of the race.

Our unworthy association with Communist Russia and what—under politicians like M. Blum—looked like a half-Communist France on behalf of the barbaric slave-traders of Ethiopia set us in opposition to the very nation from which the whole culture of Christendom was derived. Italy, the cradle of the arts and the home of the Church when both arts and the Church were most imperilled, was affronted and antagonised, while the Godless murderers of Moscow and the torturing tribes-

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men of Abyssinia were exalted as our chosen friends. Why? Because Italy had appealed to force? Had neither Moscow nor Addis-Ababa used force? Because Italy was supposed to have broken a treaty? Had not Britain and France broken more than one treaty with Italy?

It was incredible to me then, and it is appalling to me now, that for such unworthy objects we should have sacrificed the good-will of such a friend.

Sacrifice that friend we did. The British representatives at Geneva decided we had a right to try to intimidate or force Italy out of Abyssinia. The degrading spectacle was seen of British Ministers and their staffs touting and bribing small States for their support, one of the most discreditable episodes in history. Sanctions, under British leadership, and with French reluctance, were applied to Italy—and with their failure there failed also Britain's century-old command of world confidence and respect. For in blustering at Italy without the power to change her course, we had encouraged the Emperor of Abyssinia and his wretched people to prolong a hopeless resistance.

The poor little betrayed Negus was not to be the last of the victims of the sentimentalists' demand that Britain should be at once provocative and insolent. Abyssinia was not to be the last occasion when Britain nagged the strong without the power to check them and encouraged the weak without the power to help them. Dr. Schuschnigg and Dr. Benes were each in turn to discover what was the practical worth of the verbal encouragement given to them by British sentimentalists whose fondness for railing at strongly armed

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Powers was only equalled by their objection to being themselves armed.

It looks as if General Chiang Kai-shek before long will join Dr. Schuschnigg and Dr. Benes as the dupe of a sentimental but impotent British foreign policy.

It is strange how many of our most vocal sentimentalists feed themselves upon illusion, which must have proved in the last few years a most unsatisfactory diet.

The same people who predicted that Italy would be ruined by her campaign in Abyssinia, and prophesied that the independence of Austria would be maintained, and said that the forces of Czecho-Slovakia would intimidate and over-awe Germany, are now nursing the strange illusion that the war in China is gradually destroying and absorbing the forces of Japan. Actually, Japan occupies the principal rivers and cities of China, and I predict with every confidence that Japan will have concluded a successful war before the end of the present year.

The fiasco of Sanctions, against which, both before and during their imposition, I perpetually warned my fellow-countrymen, had the dire effects I predicted. The possibility of such a blunder in foreign policy lay in the very weakness to the exposure of which I have devoted the earlier chapters of this book—the weakness of under-rating the Totalitarian States. The strength and determination of Signor Mussolini were under-rated, just as the strength and determination of Herr Hitler had been—and are—persistently under-rated.

Even after Munich many people in Great Britain thought, and were allowed to think, that Herr Hitler had

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been bluffing—Hitler, the master of countless legions and the head of the greatest armed force the world has yet known. This harping on the comforting word "bluff" after Munich is the more peculiar and depressing because Herr Hitler in August 1938 put his cards on the table—for the honour of Admiral Horthy, the Regent of Hungary he displayed to his guest, and the world, new kinds of arms of which other States had no conception. When the advisers of our Foreign Office were saying that he had no real strength behind him, he obligingly displayed both quantity and quality of armed strength, just as at Nuremberg he had displayed a national fitness and unity to the news-cameras of the world.

The failure of the British statesmen and their expert advisers rightly to assess the weight and power of Germany and Italy has caused British foreign policy to present a picture of complete disarray and confusion. Despite a wise change of direction given to it within the last year, thanks to our great Prime Minister, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, it is still full of explosive possibilities.

The basis of all policy, as of all strategy, must be information. Had the British Cabinet between 1933 and 1938 been supplied with accurate information and wise advice by those serving them abroad it would have been impossible for such colossal misjudgments to be made.

Too often are wrong appointments made in London to Embassies and Legations abroad. It has been the experience of all knowledgeable travellers to meet British Ministers obviously unfitted for and unsuited to their posts. Many are men who pursue a small social life

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in the Capital to which they are accredited, shutting themselves off from any personal contact with the political realities of the country.

Occasionally, it cannot be doubted, a man who insists upon sending home news and views which do not support the predilictions of his 'Chief' is translated to some other post in some other land, to make room for a more somnolent or sycophantic representative.

I have called the Abyssinian campaign a perfect demonstration of the inability of those in command of our Foreign Office and intelligence services to grasp elementary facts and draw from them simple conclusions. It was a perfect demonstration, but by no means an isolated one. Our attitude towards the Sudeten German problem in Czecho-Slovakia was such another.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

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CHAPTER EIGHT

In 1927 I launched a campaign to secure for Hungary redress of the grievances which she suffered at the end of the Great War.

Hungary's position among the group of combatants known as the Central Empires was peculiar. Her great patriot-statesman, Count Tisza, had been against the Austrian attack in 1914 on Serbia, which he insisted must mean a world war. Throughout that war Hungary had combined a gallantry in action with an equal gallantry behind the lines. No Englishman or woman was interned in that country. Her treatment of prisoners was exemplary. Her fate was to see great sections of her historic lands rent from her and many hundreds of thousands of her proud Magyar race placed under the heels of far inferior peoples.

In 1927 I wrote :—

Budapest. June 11.

"Eastern Europe is strewn with Alsace-Lorraines. By severing from France the twin provinces of that name, the Treaty of Frankfort in 1871 made another European war inevitable. The same blunder has been committed on a larger scale in the Peace Treaties which divided up the old Austro-Hungarian Empire. They have created dissatisfied racial minorities in half a dozen parts of Central Europe, any one of which may be the starting-point of another conflagration.

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> " Of the three treaties which rearranged the map of Central Europe, the last and most ill-advised was that of Trianon, which Hungary was called upon to sign on June 4th 1920. Instead of simplifying the network of nationalities existing there it entangled them still further. So deep is the discontent it has created that every impartial traveller in that part of the Continent sees plainly the need for repairing the mistakes committed.
>
> " As they now run, the frontiers of the new Central European States are arbitrary and uneconomic. But they have a more serious aspect still. *Their injustice is a standing danger to the peace of Europe.* . . .
>
> " The hands that imposed the political conditions now existing there sowed the seeds of future war. . . . We ought to root up all the dry grass and dead timber of the Treaty of Trianon before some chance spark sets fire to it. Once the conflagration has started it will be too late."
>
> (" Hungary's Place in the Sun," *Daily Mail.*)

So impressed was I by my investigations into the political situation during my visit to Hungary in that year, that on my return to London I again ventilated my views. The second article appeared on August 30th 1927 and—even now that events and the map have changed—is perhaps worth reprinting here in its entirety. I said then what the British people should have been told by their leaders in 1938, and what I was to repeat unavailingly during the years between. Had the predictions I made then, twelve years ago, been heeded, the crisis in 1938 could not have arisen. The relations of the European Powers would have been smoother, and what was at one time known as the Locarno spirit might have replaced the bitter and strained feeling that caused Mr. Chamberlain to take his hasty journeys by air to see the German Leader.

This was the article :—

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EUROPE'S POWDER MAGAZINE

GROSS INJUSTICES MAKING FOR WAR

"Paramount with the Allies during the Great War was the desire that when peace came it should be permanent. Whatever else victory might bring, the men and women of the Allied nations wanted to ensure that there should be no more Alsace-Lorraines to keep the war-spirit smouldering.

"It was the professed aim of the Peace Conference, when it gathered in Paris in 1919, to rearrange the map of Europe on a basis of self-determination. But as its work went on this principle faded from sight. The result has been that Central Europe to-day is piled high with the materials of a new conflagration. The primary cause of this is the partitioning of the Hungarian nation among its neighbours by the Treaty of Trianon, imposed upon Hungary in June 1920, which transferred—in compact masses contiguous with the main body of the Hungarian people—600,000 Hungarians to Rumania (out of a total of 1,750,000, most of whom are intermingled with the Rumanians), 1,000,000 to Czecho-Slovakia, and 400,000 to Jugo-Slavia.

"In the Peace Treaty made with Germany the principle of self-determination was so thoroughly applied that a plebiscite was even held in Schleswig to revive the frontier which the Prussians had imposed upon the Danes in 1864. But with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles the principal Allied statesmen relaxed their efforts. The task of settling with their chief enemy had been a prodigious one. Their powers of personal application were exhausted. The affairs of their own countries urgently claimed their attention. The drafting of peace terms with Germany's minor allies seemed to them a secondary matter which they might well leave to the subordinate members of their delegations.

"For similar reasons the world's interest in peace-making evaporated, and the light of publicity which had been concentrated on the work of the Conference was withdrawn. In reality only half the work of restor-

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ing a lasting peace to Europe had been performed. But the importance of what yet remained to be done was overshadowed by the achievement already accomplished, and the remaining treaties were left to be drafted behind closed doors and signed amid general indifference many months later in various suburbs of Paris.

" This negligent procedure suited very well the intrigues of various minor nationalities which had come to be associated with the Allied cause, and which stood to profit considerably from the settlements thus obscurely made.

" Representatives of these new-fangled nationalities immediately began to arrive in large numbers in Paris, where, with the aid of certain doctrinaire pamphleteers of Allied nationality, they set themselves to pull every available string to ensure that the particular peace treaty affecting their own small State should be as profitable as possible to their public and private interests. This was how grave abuses, containing the sure seed of future wars, crept into the Central European peace settlement.

" These abuses were committed in the name of self-determination. If that principle had been strictly observed all round, there would have been no cause for complaint. But the creation of Czecho-Slovakia was an artificial operation only carried through by outraging the principle of nationality which it was supposed to serve. There never had been a state or nation of Czecho-Slovakia, although in the Middle Ages there had existed a Kingdom of Bohemia whose independence ended in 1620, and whose last Queen was a British Princess, Elizabeth, daughter of James I. The frontiers of this State, however, had no resemblance to the post-war creation of Czecho-Slovakia.

" The Union of the Czechs with the Slovaks had been brought about only as the result of a meeting held at Pittsburg, U.S.A., during the war, at which the Slovaks, upon a pledge of autonomous home-rule for their people in any future Czecho-Slovak State that might be formed, agreed to support the demands of the Czechs when a Peace Conference should assemble. The conditions of

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this pledge, like those of the subsequent Treaty of Trianon, have not been carried out by the present Czecho-Slovak Government, with the result that bitter recriminations are now being exchanged between the two chief racial sections of the new republic.

" To find territory for this hybrid State, the Peace Delegates at Paris were reduced to expedients in direct conflict with their proclaimed principle of self-determination. Not only were 3,000,000 Austro-Germans incorporated in it, but its borders were extended to the south by the inclusion of a compact mass of 1,000,000 Hungarians of entirely different race and language from the Czechs. These people and the Hungarian Delegation at the Peace Conference protested bitterly but unavailingly against their fate. Its injustice was tacitly admitted by the Allies at the time in a covering letter dealing with the Treaty of Trianon written by M. Millerand, the French Premier, which contained a promise that the frontiers laid down should, if necessary, be revised.

" No sooner had the Czechs got control of the Hungarian population ceded to them than they began to subject it to oppression by the side of which the Germanisation of Alsace-Lorraine pales into insignificance. The Czecho-Slovak Government adopted towards its Hungarian minority population a deliberate policy of expropriation of property, which has continued unchecked up to the present time. The compensation for the seized property was so insignificant that it was virtually confiscated. No financial accounts of this expropriation have ever been published, nor have repeated appeals to the Czech Government resulted in their production. If only half the stories that are told about these land deals are true, the Czech Government is responsible for tolerating some of the worst frauds that have ever taken place in the public life of Europe.

" No heed was paid to the expostulations of the twelve Members of Protest whom this Hungarian minority (despite the dragooning of the electorate by the Government) returns to the Czech Parliament, nor did the injustice done attract any attention elsewhere in Europe.

It is only now, when the great Allied nations have more leisure from their own problems, that they are beginning to learn how Czecho-Slovakia and Rumania have twisted and distorted the Treaty of Trianon. *By their greed and oppression these two States have created two new Alsace-Lorraines which are nothing less than festering sores in the heart of Europe.*

" Such conduct is specially odious in the case of Czecho-Slovakia, for this State is a spoilt child of fortune. Apart from a handful of Czech ' legionaries ' who came over to the Allies, the Czechs fought on the side of the Austrians to the last. It was thus a curious freak of fortune which enabled Czecho-Slovakia at the end of the campaign to assume the rôle of a triumphant conqueror while imposing upon Hungary that of a defenceless victim.

" Czecho-Slovakia owes her independence, in fact, solely to the philanthropy of Great Britain, France, Italy and the United States, and if she has any perception of her own interests she will take care not to lose the goodwill of the peoples of these countries.

" The position of this post-war republic is by no means secure. In domestic affairs the mixed elements of which it is compounded—Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, Germans, Moravians, Poles and Ruthenes—are so antagonistic to each other that the disappearance of the State by sudden disintegration from within is always a possibility. In this way she constitutes *the powder-magazine of Europe.* From the reports in circulation it looks as if anything may happen in Czecho-Slovakia at any time. An over-night revolution might remove her from the map of Europe as an independent State.

" One thing is certain—Czecho-Slovakia cannot continue her present exploitation of her subject populations, whether they be Hungarian, Austro-German or one of the other nationalities. By doing so, she will affront the public opinion of the world, and this is a risk no modern state dare incur.

" The Czecho-Slovak Government must soon take a momentous decision. Will it elect to stand upon evasion and perversion of the Treaty of Trianon, or

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will it follow counsels of reason and justice by saying to Hungary : 'We do not wish to retain within our frontiers compact blocks of Hungarian population against their will, and we agree to a revision by plebiscite of our frontiers in this respect'?

"If such a rectification could be brought about, I should recommend that Hungary should reimburse Czecho-Slovakia for any money spent since the Treaty of Trianon upon the retroceded territory, and for the loss of employment on the part of Czecho-Slovak public functionaries, but there must be a set off in the shape of adequate compensation to the Hungarian nationals who have been wrongfully dispossessed of their properties.

"The idea of an independent Czecho-Slovakia first reached the minds of the masses of the Western nations through *The Daily Mail* and its associated newspapers, and I very much doubt whether, except for the publicity thus given, Czecho-Slovakia, as we know it to-day, would have had any existence.

"M. Masaryk, the President of Czecho-Slovakia, was during the war a highly esteemed member of the staff of contributors to these papers. I am convinced that President Masaryk himself is not satisfied with the present position in regard to the Hungarian minorities in his country, for it is stated in this month's *Fortnightly Review* that in a recent treatise entitled *The New Europe* he envisages a revision of the present frontiers of Czecho-Slovakia. I cannot do better than quote his exact words. He wrote :—

"'*The settlement of ethnographic boundaries after the storm of war will possibly be provisional in some cases. As soon as the nations quieten down and accept the principle of self-determination, a rectification of ethnographic boundaries and minorities will be carried out without excitement and with due consideration of all questions involved.*'

"I was one of those who welcomed the erection of Czecho-Slovakia into an independent State, and I should be sorry to see that country forfeit the confidence which the Allied nations placed in it. I realise, as every thinking man must, the standing danger to European peace of

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allowing Czecho-Slovakia to remain an exposed political powder-magazine. Two years ago I decided to draw attention to the perils of the present position, but I then determined to wait until the Treaty of Trianon had been in operation seven full years, so that whatever adjustments were essential could take place in the calm atmosphere of mature reflection.

"I have some hope that the Czecho-Slovaks will see how plainly to their own interest is the course that I recommend. In a large measure their development depends upon foreign financial help. Any international banker will tell them how gravely the risks of their present internal and external position compromise their standing in the money markets of the world. As one who claims some knowledge as an investor, I cannot imagine any securities with less attraction for the well-informed investing public to-day than the State Loans of Czecho-Slovakia and Rumania. The position of both those countries is far too hazardous to appeal to any but the speculative investor seeking a much higher rate of interest even than that which they are now paying. Financial houses of London and New York which handle such loans certainly owe it to their clients to warn them of the grave risks associated with investments in countries which have been endeavouring to incorporate powerful national minorities differing in race, language and often religion. I foresee that in no distant future, if neither of these States takes steps to reduce the grave dangers of trouble both at home and abroad for which their own action is almost entirely responsible, their loans will have no greater value than Russian scrip possesses to-day.

"What I claim for Hungary is no more than elementary justice. The idea of a return to her pre-war frontiers is out of the question. Hungary must pay the penalty of defeat. But that is no reason for inflicting upon her such wrongs as the war was expressly waged to abolish. She has a perfectly righteous and reasonable claim to recover the territories preponderantly inhabited by Hungarians which, as a result of the Treaty of Trianon, are cut off from all intercourse with her by every device that the malevolence of her neighbours can invent.

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"This state of things is an outrage to an ancient and splendid people with a history of high endeavour extending over a thousand years. It is fundamentally wrong, and it cannot endure. There is time now to right it peaceably and effectively. If we continue to close our eyes to the evil it will keep alive the spirit of hatred and hostility in Central Europe, with the inevitable result of a disastrous war.

"Are we so blind as to let the elements of another terrible conflict accumulate unchecked? It is the duty of Britain, France and Italy, as the members of the League of Nations primarily responsible for the present situation, to take steps to give Hungary the relief to which she is entitled. Their generosity in this matter will not be abused. They will be dealing with a nation which, though small, has a character and traditions second to none. I repeat that Hungary is the natural ally of Britain, France and Italy in Central Europe. Even during the war she showed her natural good feeling towards Britain and the United States by refusing to intern her British and American residents, who were allowed to continue their usual occupations. She was hardly more than a technical enemy of these two countries and she will make a loyal and reliable friend of whatever nation extends to her a helping hand in her day of emergency and distress."

That article was written eleven years before Herr Hitler's march into Austria and the ceding of Sudetenland cut the tangle. Two years later, on March 26th 1929, I was asked to participate in a discussion organised by *The Daily News and Westminster Gazette* on 'the next war.' My contribution contained the following passage, which presaged exactly the events of March 1938:—

"No observant man can travel through Central Europe to-day, or even study its incoherent political divisions on the map, without realising the recklessness with which real and vital interests were trampled under-

foot in making that arbitrary and ill-informed re-distribution of territory.

"All natural principles of frontier delimitation were rejected. The new boundaries had no justification, whether ethnographic, geographic or economic. They set up in Central Europe a permanent condition of inconvenience, friction and discontent which, if it is not remedied, must inevitably lead to another war.

". . . Serious possibilities of future trouble for Central Europe exist also in that other Peace Treaty of St. Germain by which the territory of Austria was carved up, principally for the benefit of Czecho-Slovakia, in such a way that the great city of Vienna, with two million people, was left practically without national territory to supply its needs or consume its products. . . . The Austrians in despair have come to look to union with Germany as the only remedy for their impossible position. When the attempt to realise that aim is made, Europe will again be brought into close danger of war, as a direct result of lack of elementary foresight in her statesmen."

There were, even then, two sides to the question. There was the repugnance with which great people like the Hungarians saw a million of their fellows under the tyranny of the Czechs and the Austrians saw their ancient capital brought to virtual ruin, and there was also the dislike of a proud people like the Germans for the domination over their national destinies of the conglomerate of small nationalities at Geneva. Of this second aspect I was vividly aware long before Herr Hitler had taken power in Berlin. As early as September 24th 1930, in *The Daily Mail*, appeared this warning :—

"A powerful, highly patriotic people like the German will never be satisfied to leave the attainment of their national ambitions at its (the League of Nation's) mercy.

"It is more likely that when a National Socialist

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Government arrives in power, Germany, under that party's vigorous leadership, will herself show the way to the immediate redress of the most flagrant injustices.

"In doing so she will achieve something far greater than the 'anschluss'—or union with Austria—to which large sections of German public opinion aspire. She would bring within her orbit not only the 3,000,000 Germans in Czecho-Slovakia, together with the 3,000,000 Hungarians in Czecho-Slovakia and Rumania, but also quite possibly the Hungarian nation itself.

"As a result of such developments, Czecho-Slovakia, which has so systematically violated the Peace Treaty, both by its oppression of racial minorities and its failures to reduce its own armaments, might be elbowed out of existence overnight."

I wish, particularly, to emphasise that this article from which I have just quoted was written in 1930. It foretold both the rise of the National Socialist Party to power in Germany and that Czecho-Slovakia, as a result, might "be elbowed out of existence overnight."

The more I studied the Central European situation, the more convinced did I become of these things.

Nearly six years after the publication of that article, in May 1936, a close and trusted colleague of mine returning from Germany told me he had the impression that Rome and Berlin had some new, major project in view. I wrote to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and one of the most powerful of their advisers a letter in which I told them of this. One sentence of that letter read:—

"If it is not Austria, it may be France and, perhaps, Britain; on the other hand, I have not the least doubt, from hints that have been dropped to me, that overnight sometime soon Czecho-Slovakia will be strangled."

Within a year the anschluss was an accomplished fact;

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within less than eighteen months Czecho-Slovakia had been made to render back to the Germans the Sudeten-land and to the Hungarians those fertile Uplands which had long been part of Hungary's very history.

The Czech tyranny was indeed strangled.

It was between 1930 and 1936 well within the competence of the British Government, acting through Geneva, to force upon Europe a revision of the unjust treaties of Versailles, Trianon and St. Germain. If an abstract love of justice had not prompted, the motive of self-preservation might have provoked such a course.

Nothing was done.

During those years, particularly in the latter three, Germany was growing not only stronger in armed force and national *moral*, but palpably more restive in her demands for redress.

In April 1936 this was so obvious to me that I wrote, in an article called "Hungary's Joy Bells Will Ring Again," yet another warning of the wrath to come. In it I said :—

> "New forces are rising in Europe which will make short work of the opposition of those over-indulged and mischievous countries Czecho-Slovakia and Rumania, which, after unjustly despoiling Hungary, have black-mailed the Great Powers into allowing them to keep their plunder. . . . The Czechs, indeed, had no separate existence till after the war, and the vast majority of them continued to fight for the Central Powers right up to the Armistice. A small contingent of deserters and political exiles joined the Allied armies under the name of the Czech Legionaries. They were diligently publicised by certain British pundits who specialised in Central European affairs. . . ."

Just how those pundits caused the creation of Czecho-

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Slovakia I set out at length about a year later when, on February 12th 1937, I published in the *The Daily Mail* an article which has a melancholy interest in the light of the false hero-worship which was to be paid to Dr. Benes in the following year. I reprint it in full :—

THE PRISONERS OF CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

"Most blunders in life have to be paid for. The blunder of creating that synthetic and spurious State called Czecho-Slovakia may well cost Europe another war.

"Of all the reckless things done by the 'peace-makers' in Paris, this was the worst. Yet the biggest ramp in diplomatic history passed all but unnoticed at the time.

"The Czech and pro-Czech intriguers who bamboozled the peace delegates had an easy game. Those overworked and weary statesmen were under strong pressure to finish quickly their recasting of the map of Europe and get back to the urgent problems awaiting them at home.

"A small set of self-seeking or time-serving 'experts' flooded them with one-sided memoranda, minutes, digests, drafts, summaries and maps. The result was that they imposed a settlement entirely in the interests of the Czechs.

"'The agreements and bargains were made behind closed doors,' says the American delegate, Mr. Lansing, in his history of the Peace Conference. One British journalist who was prominent in the hole-and-corner dealings to which Czecho-Slovakia owes her baneful and fraudulent existence boasted in a speech that 'a few experts knowing their own minds and concentrating all their efforts on a given end, can sometimes achieve ends unattainable by the leaders of uninformed opinion and uninformed statesmanship.'

"These Czechs were one of the subject races of the Austro-Hungarian Empire before and throughout the war. Owing to the fact that the Czech soldiers deserted in unusually large numbers, it was possible for pro-Czech busybodies in England and America to represent them as

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an oppressed nation entitled to indulgent recognition from the Allies.

"At the Peace Conference this view was pressed upon the Supreme Council with much bogus evidence to back it up. A typical example was the notorious 'Pittsburg Agreement' of May 30th 1918, by which Czechs and Slovaks were supposed to have agreed to combine to form a State. This was negotiated by Dr. Masaryk, who afterwards became President of Czecho-Slovakia, during a propaganda tour in the United States.

"When the document was presented to the Peace Conference it occurred to no one to point out that the Czechs and Slovaks who had accepted were all American citizens, and as such hardly qualified to decide the fate of Central Europe. Yet when it had served its purpose this agreement was repudiated by Dr. Masaryk. He had pledged himself to secure for the Slovaks a parliament of their own and autonomous government in the new State. To preserve their own preferential position, the Czechs got out of the bargain by saying that it did not count because it had been signed on a public holiday.

"But Czechs and Slovaks combined numbered only 8½ millions. Accordingly, by all sorts of specious arguments of which the peace delegates in their haste would admit no rebuttal, the Czech leaders asserted a further claim to annex large blocks of peoples of entirely different race.

"In this way Czecho-Slovakia was rounded out on the North by the inclusion of 3¼ million Germans who had hitherto been under Austrian rule, and in the south by the ruthless appropriation of three-quarters of a million of pure-blooded Hungarians.

"These two solid contingents of foreigners have since been held as prisoners of Czecho-Slovakia. They were handed over to the Czechs with no more consultation than if they had been cattle, and have been treated by the Czech authorities with no more regard for their rights and feelings.

"As captives of a race notorious for petty meanness they have been subjected to cold-blooded expropriation and oppression. Every effort has been made to sup-

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press their languages, and the Czech police have tried to break their spirit by systematic persecution.

"Last year a Defence of the Realm Act was passed which exposes any German or Hungarian to instant deportation from his home on the frontiers to the interior of the country at the whim of the local Czech authorities.

"For, loaded as they are with spoils, the Czechs have a guilty conscience. They have armed intensely without regard for the spirit of the Treaty of Versailles, to which they owe their adventitious existence.

"Had it not been for Hitler, the Czechs might never have had to rue their evil doings. But the immense development of armed strength in Nazi Germany now threatens them with retribution. The grievances of the 3¼ million Germans who live under the oppressive rule of Prague are not unheeded in Berlin, where the just claims of Hungary for the recovery of her lost nationals beyond the Czech border have also found sympathetic consideration.

"The dragon's teeth that the Czechs have sown are sprouting all around them in a crop of deadly dangers.

"Dreading this menace of retribution, Czecho-Slovakia last year made a pact of mutual assistance with Russia. A large mission of Red Air-Force officers at once came to Prague, and has set itself to organise the use of Czech aerodromes and fuel supplies by Bolshevist war-planes.

"The only effect of this has been to fan the smouldering wrath of Germany, for Czecho-Slovakia, thanks to the position carved out for her in the heart of Europe, might well serve as an advanced base for a Soviet attack on Germany. From aerodromes on Czech soil the Bolshevist bombers could be over Berlin, Dresden and Breslau within an hour.

"Ten years ago I said in these columns that Czecho-Slovakia was a disturbing element in Central Europe. To-day the war-clouds hang heavy along her frontiers.

"There might still be time for the Czech Government to make reparation, but it is under the control of the same scheming politicians as brought that hybrid country into existence.

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"Dr. Benes, the chief begetter of the Czecho-Slovak State, is now its President. Of him, even so sympathetic a Socialist writer as Professor Harold Laski has said: 'I doubt whether any European statesman entirely trusts Dr. Benes. No one knows better than he how to be most things to all men.'

"Dr. Benes had done well out of his political career. Signs of the wrath to come suggest he would do well either to retire or to reform his prison-camp policy. It is significant that his country has not a single friend among the five States on her own borders.

"The Pharaoh who hardened his heart was engulfed by the Red Sea. It is the more terrible flood of German armaments that is surging round the Czech frontiers to-day. The prisoners of Czecho-Slovakia may yet see their captors overtaken by the fate of the old Egyptian tyrant who would not let the people go."

Despite the onward roll of events which I tried to depict in that article, British rearmament lagged tardily behind even our barest need, and no attempt was made to achieve redress of Central European grievances by diplomatic means.

By April 1938 all that I had predicted of danger had come to actuality.

In that month I had reached my seventieth birthday, which I celebrated by landing from a trans-Atlantic journey just before making a tour of certain European States where, as is my custom, I desired to see things for myself and obtain information at first hand. I could not, I felt, relinquish the political and executive control of *The Daily Mail*—which I had determined to do at that age—and remain utterly silent upon what I knew to be the gravest set of dangers that had ever threatened the British people. I therefore arranged to contribute some six or seven articles to that paper

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which took the form of a kind of causerie on current affairs.

My apprehension about the danger to world peace of the situation in Czecho-Slovakia was so acute by this time that this topic in those notes was dominant. Why this was so will be apparent from my remarks published on April 29th, under the heading " A Few Postscripts."

> " Numbers of our pugnacious pacifists are now saying that we should stand up for Czecho-Slovakia. Do they realise that almost half its population regards the Government of Czecho-Slovakia as a tyranny ?
>
> " Do they realise that the country contains 3,500,000 Germans—24 per cent. of its population—who are deadly hostile to that Government, and with reason ?
>
> " In addition to this German minority there are great minorities of Hungarians, Poles, Slovaks and Ruthenians who detest the tyranny of Prague.
>
> " There are at this moment in Czecho-Slovakia 1,300 citizens awaiting trial on charges of military treason, a significant symptom of terror and unrest.
>
> " This caricature of a country under its Czech leaders has from the moment of its birth committed almost every conceivable folly.
>
> " Contrary to the spirit of the very Treaty which created its Constitution, it has armed to the teeth, and used its arms to dragoon those minorities which were handed over to its untender mercies without the asking of their yea or nay.
>
> " It is not the Germans alone who were treated with brutality. Quite recently members of the Hungarian minority found themselves denied visas to enable them to cross the Czecho-Slovakian frontier to their original native country even when their purpose was so personal and so sacred as to attend a mother's funeral.
>
> " The 3,500,000 Germans in Czecho-Slovakia, be it remembered, form a larger community than the population of Southern Ireland, to which the British Government has seen fit to grant independence. . . ."

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I added that in my view the British Government should warn France that her treaty with Czecho-Slovakia—far distant as that country is from French frontiers—was a virtual challenge which Germany might not be slow to take up. In the problem of Czecho-Slovakia, I declared, France had no *locus standi*.

A week later in the second of my "Postscript" articles, I repeated :—

> "Czecho-Slovakia is not of the remotest concern to us.
>
> "If France likes to burn her fingers there, it is a matter for France, although such a policy is meeting with increasing opposition in France from newspapers and public men. Indeed, the *Eclaireur de Nice*—one of the three best-known French provincial newspapers—declared only a few days ago that 'the bones of a small French soldier are worth more than all the Czecho-Slovaks in the world. . . .'"

I added to a somewhat lengthy consideration of the state which the problem had then reached a repetition of my warning that :—

> "Nothing should induce the British Government to mix itself actively in this dangerous problem.
>
> "The Germans are a very patient people. I cannot imagine for one moment that Britain for something like twenty years would have remained quiescent while three and a half million Britons on the frontiers of Britain were under the heel of a thoroughly detested people, speaking a foreign language and with an entirely different national outlook. From what I know of my countrymen, they would have forcibly intervened within a very few years of such an outrage."

My concern with the Central European problem, as I have said earlier, was twofold. The injustice to such a noble people as the Hungarians evoked general

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resentment. As with Italy and the Abyssinians, it seemed to me that we were tending to attach Britain to an unworthy ally against an ancient friend, that we were striving to perpetuate a situation in which a people to whom Europe owed much were to be placed at the mercy of a cruder and more barbaric race. In addition to this emotion, was that of alarm that we, in our unarmed state, should seem wilfully to try to aid the enemies of Germany *in matters that did not concern us except from motives of sheer animosity.*

"Reiteration is the soul of journalism"—so I hammered again at my urgent warnings on May 13th 1938:—

> "We should keep," I wrote, "an entirely free hand in Central European questions. Just as we would refuse to join in any plan for the encirclement of Germany, so we should refuse to have any part in a plan to help economically the neighbouring States of Germany with a desire to injure Germany through trade.
>
> "To divert purchases from other parts of our own Empire in favour of produce from South-eastern Europe with no true economic motive is as much a form of hostile pressure on Germany as any other would be.
>
> "Our interests do not lie in Europe. We are an oceanic people. We are the descendants of the Vikings, and should adhere to our historic rôle as a maritime people.
>
> "We should look after our Dominions and overseas possessions and proclaim it as our policy that whatever happens on the Continent of Europe—except, possibly, a menace to the French and Belgian frontiers—is no concern of ours.
>
> "If Germany forces a way to the Black Sea, some of us may not like it, but what has it to do with us?
>
> "Hungary is again on tiptoe. The trouble in Czecho-Slovakia is providing her, at long last, with an opportunity to recover that part of that land which has a majority of Hungarians.

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" Some ten years ago I received a ' round robin ' signed by twenty high officers of the active and reserve army of Hungary, asking me to go to their country and take a hand in its government.

" I told them I thought Admiral Horthy was a great Hungarian patriot who was admirably fulfilling his duties as Regent of Hungary.

" As for a restoration of the Monarchy, I said that they could not go outside the old royal line, and if there were to be any restoration at all, a Hapsburg must succeed a Hapsburg.

" For nineteen years the Government at Budapest has now been supremely prudent, but it seems now that a moment has arrived when a spice of audacity should have play. ' There is a tide in the affairs of men which taken at the flood leads on to fortune,' says Shakespeare.

" With the aid of her good friends Italy and Germany, Hungary can at last achieve justice, a justice which Britain, at least, will gladly see accorded to the one belligerent enemy State which in the last war did not intern British subjects.

" There is no more stirring incident in the whole history of Europe than that which occurred when the Empress Maria-Theresa, harassed and hounded by her enemies, rallied the Hungarians to her aid. In her darkest despair that great and gallant woman achieved a remarkable reversal of her fortunes. In two stirring sentences a modern historian, Professor Fisher, has described it: ' In the hour of her tribulation Maria-Theresa threw herself upon the loyalty of her Hungarian subjects and found in that chivalrous and warlike aristocracy a fiery response. The Bavarians were driven out of Munich, and French out of Prague.'

" The appeal of the Empress to the people and nobles was made in 1741 at the old town of Pressburg. For hundreds of years the name of that ancient capital of Hungary has been sacred in the legends of the Hungarians.

" It is almost incredible that this historic town should have been ceded to Czecho-Slovakia, but so it was. Immediately the Czechs obtained possession they had the effrontery to change the name to Bratislava.

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"Could wanton insult and outrage be carried further?

"Ten or eleven years ago a British officer who had served on the Central Commission on Territorial Questions at the Peace Conference said that the Commissioners were responsible for the inclusion of Pressburg in Czecho-Slovakia.

"I said it was a damned shame.

"His excuse was that the Commission had been told to hurry, that haste was supremely important. The Commission, in fact, had no time for proper examination and consideration.

"It was thus that one of the gravest injustices in history was perpetrated.

"If peace is to have a chance, the sooner the Czecho-Slovakian problem is settled the better. It is at present a canker in the heart of Europe, poisoning the relationships between half its peoples."

Fortunately the whole of the British people were not seized by that queer madness which elevated Dr. Benes to the status of a suffering and persecuted Saint and the Czecho-Slovakian majority into the rôle of martyrs. The truth did begin to prevail.

In dispelling the fog of falsehood which surrounded the Czecho-Slovakian problem, Mr. Lloyd George did his share. In *The Truth About the Peace Treaties* (Volume II) he gave a very frank picture of the means whereby Dr. Benes had bamboozled—there is no other word—the Allied Powers into creating Czecho-Slovakia. I cannot do more than extract a few passages:—

"On February 5th the Peace Conference," writes Mr. Lloyd George, "invited Dr. Benes, the Prime Minister of the new Czecho-Slovak State, to appear before them and state his case. He presented it with great skill and craft. He either ignored or minimised the fact that he was claiming the incorporation in the Czecho-Slovak Republic

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> of races which, on the principle of self-determination, would have elected to join other States. He was full of professions of moderation, modesty and restraint in the demands put forward for the new Republic. He larded his speech throughout with phrases that reeked with professions of sympathy for the exhalted ideals proclaimed by the Allies and America in their crusade for international right."

From this Pecksniffian attitude Dr. Benes advanced to definite proposals and pledges. He said he :—

> ". . . wished to observe that the Czecho-Slovak Government had no intention whatever of oppressing (the German Bohemians). It was intended to grant them full minority rights, and it was fully realised that it would be political folly not to do so."

This protestation, so soon to be broken, he followed with a Memorandum which he addressed to the New States Committee of the Peace Conference (May 20th 1919) declaring that :—

> " It is the intention of the Czecho-Slovak Government to create the organisation of the State by accepting as a basis of natural rights the principles applied in the Constitution of the Swiss Republic, that is, to make the Czecho-Slovak Republic a sort of Switzerland, taking into consideration, of course, the special conditions in Bohemia."

Mr. Lloyd George follows the text of this Memorandum by the setting out of seven specific pledges given by Dr. Benes, each one of which was afterwards broken or disregarded (*Truth About the Peace Treaties*, Vol. II, page 937). He promised " an extremely Liberal régime, which will very much resemble that of Switzerland " (*op. cit.*, 938).

The changing view of the English that Czecho-

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Slovakia was not a worthy occasion for war enabled me to write more hopefully on May 20th :—

> " I find a growing appreciation of the justice of Hungary's claims to the restoration of the territory and the people torn from her and given by a hasty and iniquitous treaty to Czecho-Slovakia. The British imagination has been seized by the fact that there are more Germans in Czecho-Slovakia than there are Irishmen in Southern Ireland to whom we have given self-government, and, in addition, large blocs of Hungarians numbering more than a million."

I foresaw that any relief of the Sudetens which was not accompanied by a similar relief of some, if not all, of the other minorities, would bring not peace but a sword to Central Europe. Anxious that the people of Britain and their leaders should not have a false perspective about this I reminded them that :—

> " Christendom as a whole owes Hungary a great debt. For centuries that country was the bastion against which the forces of Mahomet vainly hurled themselves. The Hungarian King, Louis II, and the flower of his race spent their lives to stem the Turkish tide at the Battle of Mohacs in 1526. Not until their strenuous resistance had twice been bloodily overcome did the Turks advance in 1529 to the siege of Vienna, and then so weakened that after three weeks the investment of that city had to be abandoned.
>
> " For more than two centuries Hungary stood guard for Europe against the vast hosts of Mohammedanism, when nothing else would have prevented those great warriors from marching through Europe to the North Sea, to the ruin of our Christian civilisation.
>
> " The endurance which the Hungarians showed in those days towards the Turkish invaders they have displayed since the last war.
>
> " Notwithstanding the impositions, humiliations and

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> cruelties which were heaped upon them by Czecho-Slovakia, they have refrained from violence, and have patiently endured their sufferings in the full hope and knowledge that redress would not be denied to them.
>
> " The Germans, with whom they fought side by side, regarded them as the worthiest of their allies in the last war. The British who fought against them, found them among their stoutest foemen."

Eventually, by the efforts of Germany and Italy at Vienna, Hungary had restored to her her northern tracts and a million of her people. That restoration made a deep difference to European politics. It was to the Totalitarian States, and not to the " democracies," that Hungary had reason for gratitude. There was again demonstrated what I had predicted must come about—the domination of a well-armed, well-disciplined Germany over the affairs of Europe, and the slighting of the ill-armed, muddled and undisciplined democratic States.

The full fruits of that demonstration Europe has not yet gathered.

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CHAPTER NINE

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CHAPTER NINE

THE end of the iniquitous treaties which had made the Czech tyrannies possible came, as all know, in October 1938. Instead of coming, as it might have done, by amicable arrangement, it came by a threat of war. Mr. Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister of Great Britain and the leading statesman of the British Empire, had thrice to fly hurriedly to Germany, and had to invoke the aid of Signor Mussolini, whom Britain had treated so contemptuously three years before, in an eleventh hour attempt to prevent the defenceless millions of Britain from being exposed to the danger, if not the actuality of German bombs. By so doing he saved the peace of Europe, and all credit is due to him.

It may be easy now for some minds to minimise the danger of September 1938. At the time it was real enough.

My warnings had always been that no more terrible mistake could be made than to suppose that Herr Hitler was a bluffer. When he insisted upon justice for the Sudeten Germans he was prepared to back his insistence by strong arms. He was ready, if necessary, to face a world war. This he told Mr. Chamberlain frankly.

That the international wrong of placing Hungarians under the heels of the Czechs would some day bring Europe to the brink of war I had predicted for over a

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decade before the plight of the Sudetens brought re-armed Germany forward as their champion. I was, thus, under no illusion that the crisis was not a real one.

The treatment which Geneva, under the lead of Britain and France, had meted out to Italy in 1935 had so changed European relationships that in March Germany was able to incorporate Austria into the Reich without any action by Italy to prevent it. It was obvious that over the question of Czecho-Slovakia the Rome-Berlin Axis would be solid in the following September.

Between the visit of Mr. Chamberlain to Berchtesgarten and his visit to Munich the dreadful and imminent possibility was that Britain might find herself at war with this strong combination.

The British know now, through the revelations of such men as General Harington and Captain Liddell Hart, that neither in these islands nor in the Mediterranean were they prepared for aerial assault. I was convinced of it at the time.

I had predicted the danger long before it developed and had repeatedly warned the nation, as this book records, of its complete unpreparedness. Because of this I watched with special sympathy and anxiety the great efforts which Mr. Chamberlain was making to avert a catastrophe.

Central Europe in arms and mobilised—and the German Fuehrer about to address his own nation in a speech which might mean the launching of war—that was the situation at the very height of the crisis, on September 26 1938. On that day I wired to Herr Hitler in these terms :—

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"You have had proofs of my friendship towards Germany, and I am confident you will not resent it if I venture respectfully to appeal to you before you speak to-night.

"Peace and war are in the balance, and like you I know what are the horrors of war, for, as you are aware, I lost two of my three sons in the last war.

"A hopeful word from you would bring relief to millions."

"Yours very sincerely,
"ROTHERMERE."

War was averted, thanks to the initiative and energy of Mr. Chamberlain and the co-operation of Signor Mussolini. The Sudeten prisoners of Czecho-Slovakia were freed.

The later restoration of Hungarian territories and populations, of which I have written in the previous chapters, was the inevitable sequel. The agreement of Munich made possible the arbitration of Vienna.

What the democratic States, with their often reiterated adulation of "self-determination" had failed to do for the oppressed minorities under Dr. Benes, the Totalitarian States had done. They had done it because they were ready to fight if necessary for a justice about which the unarmed nations could only talk.

In that tremendous week Herr Hitler had the fate of Europe in his hands. Having recorded how, when he was still derided and ridiculed, I had tried to impress upon the British public the true significance of the man, which was proved fully at Godesberg and Munich, I must now recall how my efforts were renewed when the Munich crisis was developing.

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CHAPTER TEN

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CHAPTER TEN

It is foolish to sneer at truisms. They are valuable because they *are* truisms—in other words, they *are* true. One of the most hackneyed of them is that it is impossible to make omelettes without breaking eggs. Another is that you cannot make a revolution in kid gloves.

The happy and sheltered peoples of the British Isles, who have known neither invasion nor revolution for centuries past, resent bitterly and strongly the methods of force which were used by both Signor Mussolini and Herr Hitler in establishing and maintaining their respective systems of government. Both Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany were actually counter-revolutions. They were reactions from Communism. Communism in action is an ugly thing. It is not to be stopped nor overturned by speeches and ballot-boxes.

The necessity for such use of force was well understood by Lord Baldwin, who has never shown himself friendly to either Fascism or Nazism, when he told the House of Commons that :—

> " The German is naturally a law-abiding man, and he had a glimpse into the abyss when Communism in Germany raised its head—and Communism was a creed of violence and force. It was beaten ultimately by another creed of violence and force."

For the understanding of Herr Hitler and his remarkable

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career it is necessary that the circumstances of his attainment to leadership should first be understood. For the bath of misery in which the Germans were compelled to wallow during the years when waves of inflation rolled over their economic heads the victors in the last war were largely to blame. They did not give to the old German Republic the aid which they might have given and which would have averted the worst of the evils. They did nothing to teach the Germans to look elsewhere than to Communism for their salvation.

Herr Hitler was one of those gallant men of the trenches who returned to civilian life to find their ardours and sufferings and bravery scoffed at by those they had tried to defend. Eventually he saw his race, both in Germany and Austria, over-run by a political gang of terrorists known to be financed by money from Bolshevist Russia. In his passionate determination to redeem his country from the horror about him, it was inevitable that he should first deal forcefully with those inside his own borders who were the cause of that horror and truculently with those outside his own borders who were indirectly responsible for it.

The means and weapons by which Nazism in Germany, as Fascism in Italy, came to power were not the wanton choice of brutal men. They were the *only* means. The alternative was failure and destruction.

While I have always understood the British antipathy to the use of physical violence, I have equally understood the causes of its use in countries abroad of different circumstances from our own. I understand it there, just as I understand the causes of the violence shown to the rebels in India when the Sepoys were blown from

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the guns after the massacre of British women and children at Delhi. I deplore the use of concentration camps in Germany and Italy to-day, just as I deplored Kitchener's use of them in Africa at the beginning of the century, but in each case I have understood their evil necessity.

For this reason, and because I knew the man, I felt constrained, when Herr Hitler was being roundly abused by the English Left-wing Press, to tell the British public what I knew of him. In two issues of *The Daily Mail* in May 1938 I wrote of him what I now gladly put on more permanent record :—

> " Great numbers of people in England," I wrote, " regard Herr Hitler as an ogre, but I would like to tell them how I have found him. He exudes good-fellowship. He is simple, unaffected and obviously sincere. It is untrue that he habitually addresses private individuals as if they were public meetings.
>
> " He is supremely intelligent. There are only two others I have known to whom I could apply this remark—Lord Northcliffe and Mr. Lloyd George. If you ask Herr Hitler a question, he makes an instant reply full of information and eminent good sense. There is no man living whose promise given in regard to something of real moment I would sooner take.
>
> " He believes that Germany has a divine mission and that the German people are destined to save Europe from the designs of revolutionary Communism. He has a great sense of the sanctity of the family, to which Communism is antagonistic, and in Germany has stopped the publication of all indecent books, the production of suggestive plays and films, and has thoroughly cleaned up the moral life of the nation.
>
> " Herr Hitler has a great liking for the English people. He regards the English and the Germans as being of one race. This liking he cherishes notwithstanding, as he says, that he has been sorely tried by malicious personal comments and cartoons in the English Press.

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> "I was talking with Herr Hitler some eighteen months ago when he said, 'Certain English circles in Europe speak of me as an adventurer. My reply is that adventurers made the British Empire.'"

To this I added some details of a conversation I had had with him about relative air strengths, and the following week, in response, as will be seen, to the interest my picture of the man had aroused, I wrote further :—

> "My remarks about Herr Hitler last week aroused a great deal of interest, apparently, among readers who hitherto have had to form their idea of him from newspaper comments and caricature.
>
> "Herr Hitler is proud to call himself a man of the people, but, notwithstanding, the impression that has remained with me after every meeting with him is that of a great gentleman. He places a guest at his ease immediately. When you have been with him for five minutes, you feel that you have known him for a long time.
>
> "His courtesy is beyond words, and men and women alike are captivated by his ready and disarming smile.
>
> "He is a man of rare culture. His knowledge of music, painting and architecture is profound."

Many people seemed to find difficulty in reconciling the conception of a man of culture with a man of resolute action.

Why this should be so, I do not know. British 'Christian Generals' like Havelock and Gordon had the same mixture of traits. General John Nicholson, one of the heroes of the Indian Mutiny, was a man of great culture and personal piety, but he was relentless not only with the enemy but with his own colleagues if he esteemed them weak. Almost his dying words when he learnt that his successor in command was showing an unwise softness to the enemy were, "Thank God, I still have strength enough left to shoot him!"

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It is probable that if a poll were taken to decide who in common estimation is the greatest political Englishman ever thrown up in our history, the name of Cromwell would lead all others. But Cromwell was a man of the greatest determination and the most ruthless methods.

The two sides of character shown by such honoured Englishmen and by Herr Hitler are as familiar as anything in human history. Shakespeare was aware of them when he wrote :—

> " In peace, there's nothing so becomes a man
> As modest stillness, and humility;
> But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
> Then imitate the action of the tiger;
> Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,
> Disguise fair nature with hard favoured rage. . . ."

Whatever means the new régime in Germany found necessary to establish itself, it is undoubtedly true, as I wrote on May 20th 1938 in *The Daily Mail* that :—

> " Herr Hitler's policy is achievement without bloodshed. He reached supremacy in Germany, a country of 68,000,000 people, with little loss of life. Austria was brought into the German Empire without a single shot being fired.
>
> " In the troubles in Palestine during the past five years more people have lost their lives than in Germany and Austria from the establishment of the Hitler régime to the present time."

It was because of current misunderstanding about Germany that I appended to my notes on Herr Hitler two more general paragraphs :—

> " My special study of Germany continues to-day for one special reason. It is that I believe that without amity between Britain and Germany world peace is impossible.
>
> " I urge all my countrymen to use, individually and

collectively, their influence to cause such a difference in temper and outlook as will enable the greatest oceanic Power in the world to join hands with what is easily the greatest land Power.

" Herr Hitler has several times mentioned my campaign for a large air force for Britain. He has always told me that in my position he would have acted the same way. He believes that every country should be armed for one and every emergency.

" Without adequate arms a nation suffers from a want of self-respect. An unarmed country is a poor compliment to all those who built it up by endeavour, initiative and sacrifice." [1]

My belief in the necessity for amity between London and Berlin was proved to be sound when less than half a year afterwards Mr. Chamberlain had to use his efforts with Herr Hitler at Berchtesgarten, Godesberg and Munich to keep the peace, and managed to bring back from his third journey the ' half-sheet-of-notepaper ' pledge of the two countries not to resort to war in future, but to settle their differences by amicable conferences. Certainly the policy of insult and exasperation pursued by some of Britain's newspapers and public men cannot have been of much help to the Prime Minister in his difficult task.

The folly, apart from the danger, of such a policy was displayed more than thirty years ago in the brilliant maiden speech of my old friend Lord Birkenhead, when, as Mr. F. E. Smith, he launched a characteristically witty and biting attack on Mr. Lloyd George for his propaganda methods in favour of Free Trade.

" The President of the Board of Trade," said ' F.E.,' " informed one audience how large a part horse-flesh

[1] These quotations are from the articles " Further Postscripts " and " Some More Postscripts " in *The Daily Mail* of May 13th and May 20th 1938.

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> plays in the simple diet of the German people. The same speaker is never tired of maintaining that protection has tainted and corrupted German public life. I understand that any trade negotiations which may become necessary with Germany must be conducted through the Right Honourable Gentleman. I am not sanguine of the outcome. If you have a difficult business transaction to carry through with a competitor, a prudent reflection would perhaps suggest that it is unwise to describe him publicly as a corrupt scoundrel, subsisting principally upon the flesh of horses."

What was folly in 1906 was worse than folly in 1938.

Were I to make public some of the communications which I have had from Herr Hitler, in a correspondence bridging now several years, it would be apparent that one of his dearest hopes, cherished, as he himself has told me, long before his advent to power in Germany, is that Germany and Britain should stand side by side in amity.

One sentence I may quote, for it is in no way different from some of his public utterances. It is this : " Whatever may happen, I want to assure you at the conclusion of this letter that I firmly believe that a time will come in which England and Germany will be the solid pillars in a worried and unstable world."

On another occasion Herr Hitler said to me, " If to-day I stand for an Anglo-German understanding, this does not date from yesterday or the day before. During the last fifteen years I have spoken in Germany at least 4,000 to 5,000 times before small, large and immense mass audiences. There does not, however, exist a single speech of mine, nor a single line ever written by me, in which I have expressed myself contrary to this opinion against an Anglo-German understanding. On the con-

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trary, I have during all this time fought for it by word and in writing."

Despite the necessity for subordinating nearly everything to the gigantic task of rearming his country, Herr Hitler has a reasoned, as well as a temperamental, aversion from war. Some six years ago he expressed to me the belief that a methodical, scientific examination of European history over the last three hundred years would show that nine-tenths of the blood-sacrifices of the battlefields was shed entirely in vain—that is to say, in vain measured by the natural interests of the participating nations.

He made no exception in the case of Germany. On the contrary, he insisted that his people in those three hundred years had lost at least twenty to twenty-five million souls, probably even more, in wars which had been essentially profitless to the nation, measured not in terms of a questionable fame but of practical profit.

As I have said earlier, people have accused Herr Hitler of megalomania. That, of course, is always the charge levelled against a man who emerges from the ruck and takes and wields power. It was said of Cæsar, it was said of Napoleon, it was said of Rhodes.

That Hitler has a great and even mystic faith in his destiny is true. It would be strange, in the light of his achievements, if he had not.

He is quite aware of the view of him that is held. In an interchange of views about the possibility of Anglo-German friendship that I had with him not very long after his coming to power, he wrote :—

> " I have derived from fate the heavy task of giving back again to a great people and State by every means its

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natural honour. I see in this one of the most essential preparations for a real and lasting understanding, and I beg you, Lord Rothermere, never to regard my work from any other point of view. The feelings and views of Parliamentary demagogues are liable to rapid and unexpected changes. The world may, however, for what I care, reproach me with what it will. One reproach they certainly cannot level at me : that I have been vacillating in my views and unreliable in my work. If an unknown man with such weaknesses set out to win over a nation in fifteen years he would meet with no success. Herein resides, perhaps, the faith—exaggerated, as many believe—in my own personality. I believe, my dear Lord Rothermere, that in the end my unchanging standpoint, undeviating staunchness and my unalterable determination to render a historically great contribution to the restoration of a good and enduring understanding between both great Germanic peoples will be crowned with success. And believe me that this is the most decisive contribution to the pacification of the world. An Anglo-German understanding would form in Europe a force for peace and reason of 120,000,000 people of the highest type. The historically unique colonial ability and sea-power of England would be united to one of the greatest soldier-races of the world. Were this understanding extended by the joining-up of the American nation, then it would indeed be hard to see who in the world could disturb peace without wilfully and consciously neglecting the interests of the White race."

In Signor Mussolini's phrase, much water had flowed under the bridges of the Tiber, the Spree and the Thames since those words were written, but I, for one, have no doubt that they still express the international idea of the German Leader.

I know that when the Anglo-German Trade Agreement was reached, Herr Hitler's belief was that it might well pave the way to a wider and better understanding.

In one of his addresses to his own people, Herr Hitler

declared that his true wish was to see Germany freed from the necessity of wrangling with her neighbours, that he might pursue his work of rebuilding the nation not only metaphorically but actually.

His plans for the replanning of the great German cities are very dear to his heart. It can never be forgotten, when one enjoys his personal hospitality, that in the days of his extreme youth, and extreme poverty, his aspirations were purely artistic and architectural. Those aspirations were thwarted by circumstances, but the inner spirit which inspired them has not really changed.

He has in him something of the dual nature of our own General Wolfe, the conqueror of Canada, who, as all schoolboys know, said he would rather have written Grey's ' Elegy ' than take Quebec. If ever, by the grace of God, Europe enters upon an era of dependable peace in his life-time, it is quite certain that he will show in sociology the same drive and vision that he has hitherto shown in international and internal politics.

This is a side of his character which is rarely shown to the British public by those who comment upon him. It is, probably, a side completely overlooked by our diplomats in their dealings with him.

In writing thus of Hitler, the man, I have no desire merely to ' glorify ' him or to seem to condone some of the acts and measures which he has found necessary during the six years of his autocracy to bring his people from the slough of odium and distress to their old position as a great nation able to bargain on terms of equality with their neighbours. My only desire is to give a sound perspective to the portrait of him in British

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minds, and to show that the ogre is, as I wrote a year ago, a human being of great culture.

That the starveling youth of Vienna should have acquired such culture may amaze unthinking people. It will amaze none who recall the life-stories of the country lad from Stratford who held horses outside a London theatre for a livelihood and of the starveling cadet at Brienne who became the master of Europe and inspired the Code Napoleon.

In talks with the ex-Crown Prince of Germany shortly after the advent to power of Herr Hitler, I could see that the ex-Crown Prince did not in any way share the hope of his dynastic supporters that an early return to the Monarchy in Germany was possible.

He expressed himself to me as a great admirer of the Fuehrer, whose rise to power, he said, was no temporary thing.

He added that in a few months Herr Hitler had established a stable Government which had done wonderful things for Germany. It was his profound conviction that the new régime would do even more wonderful things.

What the ex-Crown Prince said only confirmed the views I had formed myself over several years of acquaintance with the German people.

Whatever there may be in store for the old dynastic families of Europe, I am quite sure that no early return to power is possible, nor do I believe that in the case of one or two of the most outstanding of these families such a return is desired.

Signor Mussolini, whose friendship I also enjoy, is a man of different mould. He has not the same mystic

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intensity which characterises Herr Hitler. He, too, is a man of the people, but he is also a man of the family.

Their careers have been oddly similar. Both were born in humble surroundings. Both fought gallantly in the Great War. Both led movements against a wave of Communism and attained supreme command at an early age.

But the nature of the task was different. It may almost be said that whereas Herr Hitler had to recall his people to a former glory under a once-familiar mode of life, Signor Mussolini had to create in his countrymen a new nature. It is obvious to anyone who has frequently visited Italy, as I have done, over nearly half a century that it is not only the national temper of the Italian people which has been changed, but their very spirit.

Between the clean, tidy, self-respecting city of Naples of to-day, for example, and the beggar-infested, casual city of pre-war days there is so startling a difference that the man who wrought it may be said to have wrought a virtual miracle.

For centuries Italy was the museum and playground of the world. Cavour and Garibaldi certainly created a nation in the political sense, but they did not really bring their people into the forefront of European life. Mussolini remembered Rome. He instilled, by Roman methods, the Roman virtues.

In his work of creating the vigorous, self-respecting nation that we know to-day he expected at least the approbation of Britain. Until the rebuff of Sanctions in 1935 he regarded Italy's destiny as linked with ours.

The destiny which both Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini know themselves to be fulfilling is that

of defenders of Europe against Communism. Italy, Germany, Hungary and certain other European nations have felt the scourge, have known the bestialities and the slaughters of Communism. Britain has so far known only its verbal enmity.

When, in 1917, the extreme Left-wing took power in Europe, its leaders frankly declared that the first of their external aims was to smash the 'capitalistic British Empire.' For many troubled years British Ministers had to strive hard to stem the stream of subversive propaganda that flowed into British life from Moscow.

It would have been thought that amity between the British, who were the prime object of attack from Bolshevist-Communism, and the two nations which had successfully defeated attacks from that source would be a natural and simple attainment. So both Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini at one time thought.

For some reason difficult to fathom, the blood-bath of Moscow, the tyrannies and the cruelties, impinged with less horror upon the English mind than did the castor oil of Rome or the concentration camps of Berlin. The cousin of the English King and his family were brutally murdered, hundreds of thousands of men and women were shot down, a reign of Godlessness was declared in Moscow, and England was not much perturbed.

It is strange that although something like 2,000,000 White Russians wandered over the earth seeking a refuge from terrorism and the persecution of Red Russia, there was not, as far as I remember, a single one of our Bishops or great public men who raised a voice in their behalf.

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There was no Albert Hall demonstration. For them there was no Mansion House Fund.

In fact, it looked like an agreed silence in regard to what was, unquestionably, the greatest persecution of innocent human beings in the past five hundred years.

The necessary repressive measures in Italy and Germany aroused far more resentment, although they were far less in extent and less barbaric than the Russian outrages.

One reason, without doubt, for this difference of attitude was that from 1933 onwards Herr Hitler had roused an emotion—or, to be more accurate, two conflicting emotions—long dormant in the more civilised portions of Europe, though never absent. He had unloosed again the tide of anti-Semitism, against which social habit in Britain had for generations acted as a protective dyke.

I have never been identified with anti-Semitism. Many of my personal friends have been of the Jewish race, and I have a deep appreciation of all that our modern civilisation owes to the work of Jews through the ages.

Having said these things, I may, without being misunderstood, say this—the people of Great Britain who have not travelled in countries like Germany, Austria and Hungary have no conception of what the Jewish problem can mean. It is not a matter of prejudice but of fact that after the repeated misfortunes of certain European countries, the Jewish citizens seem to have emerged stronger and more wealthy at the expense of the native race. In some instances they have not borne their success as modestly as discretion would prompt.

While this does not excuse the methods by which the Semite problem has been tackled by Germany, it explains

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them. And, it must be admitted, reports of 'outrages' have often been exaggerated.

We have within recent years seen the renewal of diplomatic relations between Britain and Russia and between Russia and the United States. We have been urged by public men of various shades of opinion to let bygones be bygones with that country, for the sake of world trade and the pacification of the nations.

However repellent the British mind may find the German and Italian methods of dealing with a severe internal problem, those methods are less revolting than those used by the régime of Lenin and Stalin to deal with their internal troubles, which we have cheerfully condoned.

They may seem horrible to sheltered minds in snug British townships, but it behoves us to remember that our treatment of the Arabs in Palestine seems no less horrible to foreign eyes, and is in my opinion entirely inexcusable.

What Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman called our 'methods of barbarism' in South Africa did not prevent diplomatic amity with France and Japan in the opening years of this century, because that amity was necessary for the survival of our Empire. Our treatment of the Arabs to-day, revolting and shocking to all Mohammedans as it is, has not driven the Mohammedan Indian Princes from our side.

Whatever the recent drift apart of Britain and Germany may seem to have been over the Semite question, I still feel that Herr Hitler was right in regarding Anglo-German friendship as the first and best guarantee of world peace and the security of the White Race. My

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view of Hitler the man, and my agreement with that view, remain as they were in 1934, when I wrote an article which, for emphasis no less than record, I now recall.

GERMANY ON HER FEET AGAIN

" Miracles are done by faith.

" The Germans have found a new and potent faith.

" It has wrought the miracle of removing the mountains of difficulty that barred their way to national recovery.

" But it has accomplished even more. It has given Germany a new soul.

" The last two years have witnessed here a political process as profound and far-reaching in its effects as the French Revolution.

" Such a change in the character of a nation, in its internal conditions, its international standing, even in the very bearing of its people, has never before in history been achieved within so short a time.

" I warn my fellow-countrymen that Germany has set a new pace of human endeavour. She has acquired a national momentum without precedent in political dynamics.

" Germany is the new Sparta. The same spirit of national discipline and self-sacrifice which earned for the few thousand inhabitants of a small Greek city-state an enduring place in history is being reproduced here by 67,000,000 of what are in some ways the most intelligent, industrious and high-spirited, and hardy people in the world.

" Anyone who visits Germany can see for himself the concrete results of the Hitler régime. I will mention below a few of the most outstanding. But his greatest feat cannot be expressed in words or set forth in statistics —it is the rekindling of the soul of the German people.

" After less than two years of his administration the following results stand to Hitler's credit :—

" 1. *German unemployed on the day he took office numbered* 6,014,000. *On November 30th this year they were* 2,354,000.

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"2. *National and municipal Budgets have been restored from ruin to solvency. The Finance Minister recently stated that revenue had increased by more than £80,000,000, showing an improvement in the national position amounting to £200,000,000 a year in all.*

"3. *For the past two months Germany has had a favourable balance on her international trading. Despite exchange difficulties, her exports for the present year stand at 85 per cent. of the value of our own.*

"4. *The Germans are fast making themselves independent of foreign raw materials. They can now produce artificial rubber at no more than twice the present low price of the natural commodity. Hundreds of research chemists are working at the development of artificial cotton and wool. They are hotfoot on a clue which may lead to the discovery of a completely satisfactory substitute for tin at one-tenth of its cost.*

"5. *Two hundred and fifty thousand young men are in Voluntary Labour Camps, benefiting from the finest imaginable physical and social displicine. These are adding largely to the real-estate values of Germany. In two years 350,000 acres of marsh and waste land have been reclaimed by their efforts.*

"6. *One thousand four hundred miles of the finest motor roads in the world are nearing completion, giving well-paid employment to 95,000 men directly and 110,000 indirectly; 4,000 miles of such roads are planned.*

"7. *Such a spirit of national solidarity has been created that during the past two months an immense sum in cash has been collected to help the poor this winter, while gifts in kind to an equal value have been contributed. The Sunday I spent in Berlin was a monthly 'One Dish Day,' on which I shared a single-course luncheon with Herr Hitler. The money saved on these days of national self-denial all goes to the Winter Help Movement.*

"Every fair-minded person who knew Germany in pre-Hitler days will agree that these achievements constitute a miracle of national recovery.

"Are we in Britain awake to what this recovery

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means, or is our judgment still fogged by distorted impressions derived from prejudice and propaganda?

"As I have said before I now repeat, that nearly all the news regarding the Nazi régime published even in our most responsible journals is pure moonshine. These have spread, for instance, the impression that German Jews lead an almost hunted existence. Yet in German hotels and restaurants I have frequently seen merry and festive parties of German Jews who showed no symptoms of insecurity or suffering.

"I was glad to read the statement made in a wireless broadcast by Sir Austen Chamberlain since I have been in Germany, to the effect that the Hitler régime is firmly rooted. Nothing could be more evident and certain, yet so slow are some of our public men to recognise plain facts, that Sir Austen's frank and common-sense declaration deserved appreciation.

"I regard Germany to-day as not only potentially but actually the strongest Power on the Continent of Europe, for what she may lack in material equipment—and this, I believe, amounts to very little indeed—is more than made up by the superb spirit of the nation and its supreme confidence in its Leader.

"We have no ground of quarrel with these people. Their interests, our own, and those of the entire civilised world will be best served by close and friendly co-operation between us.

"When once a few of the more glaring injustices imposed by the Peace Settlement have been removed, there will be no reason why Europe should not be entirely peaceful for years to come.

"We and the Germans are blood-kindred and, as Herr Hitler remarked to me, our nations have fought each other only once—though in many campaigns they have been faithful allies. The German Chancellor repeatedly expressed in our conversations his desire for a complete Anglo-German understanding, which he regards as a sure road to peace.

"If Germany and Britain, alienated for over twenty years, could thus come once more together, a new era of well-being would open before both of us.

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"There will never be a better opportunity than now, when all the forces and energies of that splendid nation are held in one strong grasp.

"Could we but bring about this better feeling between the two countries in 1935, the coming year would be one of the most fortunate in the memory of mankind."

(*Daily Mail*, December 28th 1934.)

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

NOBODY can hope to understand Herr Hitler or the Germany he has restored who does not first grasp the sense of injustice which permeated the German people in the dreadful years between 1918 and 1933.

The Germans have always felt that they were tricked into the Armistice. They could have fought on, causing the loss of many hundreds of thousands of lives. They did not fight on, to the last gasp, because they were offered an armistice on specific terms laid down by President Wilson and assented to by the Allies. Those terms included the promise that German territories would not be taken from them.

In addition to the Fourteen Points of President Wilson's famous 'Note' and the Four Points of what is known as his 'Four Point Speech'—on which the Armistice was accepted—the Germans had been told by all the resources of modern propaganda that the Allies were not fighting for territorial aggrandisement and were not fighting the German people, but only the Kaiser and the Junkers.

They rid themselves of the Kaiser and his Junkers, and they accepted the Armistice.

On the very morning that the Armistice was concluded, the British Premier, Mr. Lloyd George, said at the Guildhall in London :—

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"We do not seek a yard of real German soil."

Two days later at Downing Street he said :—

> "What are the conditions of peace? They must lead to a settlement which will be fundamentally just. No settlement that contravenes the principles of eternal justice will be a permanent one. The peace of 1871 imposed by Germany on France outraged all the principles of justice and fair play. We must not allow any sense of revenge, any spirit of greed, any grasping desire, to override the fundamental principles of righteousness."

I cannot claim, any more than Mr. Lloyd George, to know exactly what are the principles of eternal justice, but I do know that they cannot be reconciled with broken pledges. Not only were many yards of German soil taken from Germany, but many yards of the soil of Germany's Allies were likewise rent from them.

If the Peace of 1871 outraged all principles of justice and fair play, it did not rend from France her colonies. The Peace of Versailles did take the colonies from Germany, despite the many specific pledges that the victors in offering an armistice did not seek any territorial gains.

This taking of Germany's overseas possessions by the Allies was more than a mere breach of pre-Armistice faith, bad as that was. It was a special kind of hurt to Germany's pride.

In advocating an Anglo-German Pact I was never under any illusion that the way to such a desirable end would be smooth. From the viewpoint of Britain, who saw Nazi means of attaining power with something of a mental shock, and from the viewpoint of Germany, who cherished a sense of injustice against all the Allied Powers, there was much to forgive before true friendship could be cemented.

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But I felt, with Herr Hitler, that only by such a friendship could world peace and the security of the White race be secured. I also felt, to my alarm and regret, that most of my fellow-countrymen were not really aware of what was happening in Europe, of what new forces were stirring. They were still wrapped in the somnolent complacency of victory.

I again warned those who read my Press articles that we were drifting towards a disastrous conflict with the new Rome–Berlin axis, a conflict that need not occur.

In uttering that warning in May 1937 I was careful to take full notice of the difficulty which might arise over the question of the ex-German colonies.

At that time, as even now, many honest but ignorant electors in Britain sincerely thought that the ex-German colonies, which had become British Mandates, were as British as the old British colonies and Dominions. To speak of handing them back to Germany was tantamount in such minds to advocating a dismemberment of the Empire. This misapprehension in so many minds made it a task of great difficulty to plead for at least a consideration of the German case.

On May 4th 1937 in *The Daily Mail* I wrote :—

I WANT AN ANGLO-GERMAN PACT

"Big things are happening on the Continent, and Britain is being left out of them.

"Those deliberate and undeviating dictators, Hitler and Mussolini, are dividing Europe into spheres of influence—the Danube Valley to Germany; the Balkans and the Mediterranean to Italy.

"The Duce's recent interview with the Austrian Chancellor in Venice, and the discussions which, even

as I write, are taking place in Rome with Baron von Neurath, the German Foreign Minister, strengthen the outlines of this picture. They fulfil the forecast which I have for years been making—that the fate of Czecho-Slovakia is in the hands of Germany alone.

"For the past three years Italy's influence has been dominant among those fragmentary States which once formed the Austro-Hungarian Empire. She is now yielding this position to Germany—in return for what? For German support of Italian ambitions in the Mediterranean.

"Italy's aim is domination of that sea. With her superb Air Force she can achieve it. With German backing she can maintain it.

"What resistance to the activities of such a union can be offered by a still unarmed Britain and a desperately divided France?

"At present we are drifting steadily towards a disastrous conflict with this new German–Italian alliance. There is but one way to avert it, and that is for the British Government to take the initiative in making a pact with Germany.

"In both countries the desirability of such an agreement is admitted. Herr Hitler has several times declared to me his readiness to meet us half-way. A large and influential body of British public opinion favours closer Anglo-German relations. The difficulties in the path are not of principle but of detail.

"The most conspicuous of them concerns the former German colonies now administered by the British and Dominion Governments under mandate.

"With regard to these territories there is much misconception among British people. The mandated lands are not in any sense British property. They are not our colonies. They are merely placed under British and Dominion administration by a series of mandates from the League of Nations, to whom from time to time reports concerning that administration have to be submitted. And I believe it would be possible to confine this problem of the ex-German colonies to the limits of Africa.

"Even so, German South-West Africa would have

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to be excluded from the bargain, for it has been practically annexed to the Union of South Africa and is not at our disposal. But Britain, France and Belgium have all shared in the division under mandate of the former German colonies, while a corner of the former German East Africa was given to Portugal.

" These countries are rich in colonies. It would cost them little to combine in making some fresh and satisfactory allotment to Germany of African territory, not necessarily corresponding to the earlier boundaries. By this step they would remove the main obstacle to better and more secure relations between the Powers of Western Europe. They would also confer a boon on Africa by bringing that continent within the scope of the scientific and organising genius of the German people.

" The Germans feel their total deprivation of colonies as a humiliation. It inspires them with a resentment out of all proportion to the intrinsic value of the confiscated territories. We have the power to remove that grievance, and it would be short-sighted folly to keep the peace of Europe in peril by obstinately refusing to make a sacrifice so insignificant in comparison with the benefits that it would bring.

" The financial loss entailed by a reasonable restoration of African territory to Germany would be negligible. It has been far exceeded by the cost to British investors of a single one of the recent bad days in the ' Kaffir Market ' on the London Stock Exchange.

" The suggestion that the restoration of German rule in East Africa would cut a vital artery of British Imperial communications is an empty argument. This indeed has been done already, and done deliberately, by the recognition of Egypt as an independent State.

" By obstinately holding on to former German colonies which have not become British colonies and have comparatively small value for us, but which Germans believe would be very valuable to them, we are keeping alive in Germany a sense of wrong which will assuredly one day develop into active hostility. For the removal of such a risk a transfer of a few hundred thousand square miles of African territory would be a small price to pay."

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It will be seen that my prediction as to where the fate of Czecho-Slovakia would ultimately rest was amply fulfilled. It is now obvious that my warnings about Germany's attitude to the ex-colonies are also being justified.

Perhaps the most important warning of that early article is that the return of some of the confiscated territories, or the granting of lands in lieu of them, is for Germany not merely a matter of raw materials and economic betterment. It stands in the German mind for the removal of a humiliation which a German feels his nation should never have suffered. As Field-Marshal Goering has said, it is not a matter of economics, but of prestige.

Naturally, Germany's economic leaders would welcome additional communities who would widen German markets and give a wider trading range to the mark. But that is not, and never has been, the dominant consideration.

Many Englishmen, I know, with sincere, but as I think mistaken patriotism, resent any suggestion that a consideration of the German colonial question is even practical politics. They say with satisfying assurance that Herr Hitler will never risk a world war for the sake of a few thousand miles of indifferent colonial land. This they say even though they are themselves prepared to risk a world war for the retention of those lands. But in saying so they miss the whole point of the German colonial question. It is not the few thousand miles of indifferent colonial lands that are in question; it is Germany's right to the possession of colonies. It is Germany's determination to regain the status of a world

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Power, an equal among peers with the colonising nations of Britain, France and Italy.

The points involved are simple and few. They are these:—

(1) Was the taking of Germany's colonies by the Allies a breach of the pre-Armistice terms?

(2) If so, is Britain prepared to risk all the danger of a modern war to perpetuate a wrong?

(3) If not, does Britain prefer to embark upon such a destructive war rather than consent to an equitable re-distribution of colonial territories which would transform a bitter and antagonistic Germany into a friendly power heartily co-operating in the work of preserving world peace?

Those, surely, are the root principles. They can be, and are, complicated by other and admittedly difficult aspects of the question.

We are told, for example, that native populations must not be bartered from one controlling white nation to another like pawns on a chess-board. They were so bartered after the last war, to our supposed benefit. Actually, the Mandate system was devised as a form of trusteeship to prevent any victor nation from fully incorporating native races into anybody's colonial Empire.

We hear much, also, of the strategical aspect of the question. It is urged that Britain cannot consent to any return of German territories because that would give Germany a strategical advantage which might threaten the Empire. I would be more impressed by this argument if I were not aware that the vulnerability of London and our other great cities is the real strategical menace to the Empire. When swift, heavily-armed

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bombers can expect largely to destroy in a few days places like London, Southampton, Hull and Liverpool—all vital to Britain's survival—the transfer of lands in Africa or elsewhere will hardly affect the outcome of a short aerial war.

But all these considerations fade to nothing in my mind before the main consideration—that of keeping Britain out of a new war, which at worst would mean the end of us and all for which we have stood, and at best would leave us shattered and impoverished to bewail the loss of hundreds of thousands of British lives.

That this *must* be Britain's prime thought I have urged incessantly for over half a decade. I repeated my early warnings towards the end of 1937 in the following words :—

WHY NOT A LONDON–BERLIN–ROME AXIS ?

" Mussolini is now visiting Hitler, and their meetings may lead to the discussion of a Four-Power Pact between Britain, France, Germany and Italy.

" For the moment the first steps appear to have been taken in an attempt to link up the Rome–Berlin axis, first with London, then with Paris, and ultimately, with Warsaw. By that means the present dangerous division of Europe into mutually mistrustful and heavily armed camps would be converted into a broad-based understanding.

" No country has greater interest in the preservation of world peace than Britain, and the first duty of the British Government should be to reduce the increasingly explosive possibilities of the foreign situation. If it should be our fate to look back from the midst of another conflict upon the present period as no more than a lull between great wars, there will be bitter regret for opportunities now neglected.

" Five years ago Europe was much closer to security

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than she is to-day. The gigantic aerial armaments of Germany and Italy did not then exist. The Great Powers had not begun the costly competition in armaments which existing conditions make inevitable. More foresight and less suspicion at the time when Germany left the Disarmament Conference in September 1932 would have spared the peoples of Europe a great part of their present financial burdens, and would have reduced the risks of war.

" It is five years this month since Germany proposed that she should be accorded equality of armaments with France, on the basis of an army of 300,000 men. Tanks, heavy artillery, and military aircraft were to be abolished.

" Now that Germany has become the mightiest Power in Europe, it seems incredible that the chance of stabilising armaments at this low level should have been rejected. The French and British Governments, however, returned the answer that her demand for equality of status was ' unfortunately timed.' In consequence, Germany left the Disarmament Conference, and the great arms race in Europe began, with the Germans, though they had started from scratch, soon leading the field.

" Mussolini was the only European statesman who recognised the possibilities which that moment presented. He publicly declared that Germany's claim for equality of armaments was just, and to enable it to be met he proposed that the four Western Powers should enter into a ten-years pact of peace, for, as he rightly argued, ' the composition of the League is too general for effective action.'

" This was the origin of the ' Four-Power Pact,' which was the nearest approach to a European settlement since the Treaty of Locarno.

" Hitler, who had just taken over the Government of Germany, agreed to co-operate. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, then Prime Minister, went to Rome to discuss its terms. On July 16th 1933 the Pact was signed, but meanwhile the opposition of the French and Czecho-Slovak Governments had resulted in the exclusion from it of all reference to equality of rights or ultimate revision of treaties. The Pact was thus made ineffective from

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the first for the purpose of redressing German grievances, and so providing a permanent settlement in Europe.

"The equality of rights and revision of the Peace Treaty then denied to Germany by consent have since been obtained by unilateral action. The position of France and Czecho-Slovakia, instead of becoming more secure, has become more precarious. Recent disclosures about the inferiority of the French Air Force are altering the international situation still further to the advantage of Germany.

"Before the risks of the present position in Europe develop into grim realities, a strong effort should be made to recover the opportunity missed in 1933. And since the sterility of that attempt to reach a Western European settlement was mainly due to the misgivings of France, the British Government would be serving French interests by taking the lead in coming to an understanding with Rome and Berlin. The extension of the Rome–Berlin axis to London would transform the line-up between Italy and Germany from a danger into a safeguard for the peace of Europe.

"By the subsequent inclusion of France and Poland such an agreement would put the affairs of Western Europe upon a sure foundation.

"The only alternative to closer understanding is ultimate war. The alliances that now separate the nations of the Continent into compartments are like cracks in a chalk cliff, which steadily deepen until a landslide results.

"There are at present seven major groupings creating lines of international cleavage. They are:

"1. The 'Rome–Berlin axis';
"2. The Franco–Russian alliance;
"3. The Franco–Czecho-Slovak alliance;
"4. The Russo–Czecho-Slovak alliance;
"5. The Little Entente;
"6. The Balkan League;
"7. The Rome Protocols (linking Italy, Austria and Hungary).

"Each is a potential source of friction. It can only be a question of time before this frictionisation of Europe

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leads to another upheaval. Security lies in welding the whole surface into a wider unity of interest."

(*Daily Mail*, September 28th 1937.)

Throughout any discussion about the return of the ex-German colonies I have always held that Great Britain cannot in any way deal with, or influence negotiations, about those Mandates which are the concern of the Dominions, of Australia, New Zealand and the Union of South Africa. But France, Britain and the other Allies have such vast territorial possessions in Africa that if it is held just to satisfy Germany's claim to colonies, lands can be found for her without interference with the territories now administered by these British Dominions.

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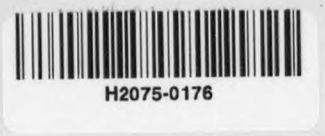
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CHAPTER TWELVE

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CHAPTER TWELVE

If the warnings and predictions which I have reprinted, or to which I have referred, in this book were summed up they would amount to this :—

> The triumph of Herr Hitler in Germany in 1933 meant the doom of the Treaties of Versailles and Trianon unless Britain and France, with the aid of a still friendly Italy, were prepared vigorously to rearm in their defence; the failure of Britain and France to realise this in time meant that the doctrine of 'Collective Security,' which really meant reliance upon an uneasy association of unarmed Powers through Geneva, was a political futility; the wanton antagonising of Italy in 1935 meant in its turn a strengthening of the forces opposed to Versailles and all its works. Such a strengthening of those forces meant that Britain, no longer an island because of the rise of aircraft, must look for her future security not in an alliance with the weak pro-Communist Powers, but with the strong anti-Communist Powers.

To this many people may say, as people have said, "Are we then to desert our ally, France? And are we to condone the aggressiveness of Japan by becoming attached to her through the Rome–Berlin–Tokio Axis?"

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During my six years' campaign for a sane foreign policy I have not shirked the necessity for dealing with these aspects.

It always seemed to me that if the admittedly punitive Treaty of Versailles was to be enforced, it must be enforced at every moment and turn of events with vigour. It was illogical to suppose that the Allies could frame a tyrannous Treaty and then hope to maintain it by methods of softness.

That was why I applauded the French realism in 1922.

But just as Britain went ' soft ' about disarmament, so France went ' soft ' because of the spread of Communism.

Britain deliberately said that she would honour the spirit of the Treaty and not arm. France, without giving any enthusiastic support to disarmament, inaugurated an era of stay-in and sit-down and lie-down strikes, of forty-hour weeks, which meant that—relative to a vigorous, twelve-hour-day Germany—she was not arming.

If, as a man of business, I had a partner who contracted some habit of laziness, or worse, I should not be blamed for striving to sever my affairs from his in order to join them to a more reliable and dynamic associate.

My concern for France in 1933—which I have marked as the key year of modern history—was second only to my concern for Britain. This the French generously realised, as this note from one of my Postscript articles amply shows :—

> " In their attitude to me foreign Governments have been very generous. When I, in collaboration with that great old Frenchman, the late Senator Menier, Chairman of the Air Committee of the French Senate, had for some time

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diligently advocated in French newspapers the building of 10,000 aeroplanes for France, the French Government wished to confer on me what was for an unofficial foreigner a most unusual distinction—the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour."

(*Daily Mail*, May 6th 1938.)

Actually, my campaign for France followed precisely the lines of my campaign for Britain. I urged immediate and rapid rearmament. The strength of my warning to our old ally can be gauged from an interview that I gave to the French Press when I was in the South of France in the December of 1933. It appeared under dramatic headlines that ensured attention.

I then said:—

"I am convinced that no country is more earnest than France in its desire for peace—but that is not enough to ensure peace.

"France has spent thousands of millions of francs in building a great chain of defensive works along her frontier—but neither is that enough to ensure peace.

"She has the most powerful army in the world—but not even that will ensure peace.

"France, like Britain, is faced with a fact which has profoundly changed the whole problem of national defence—the fact that there are no frontiers or seas to give protection in the air.

"In 1914 it was nineteen days after the declaration of war before the first enemy soldier set foot upon French soil. In any future war enemy 'planes could be over French territory in as many minutes.

"In the last war there were two distinct regions—*le front* and *l'arrière*. In aerial war there will be only *le front*—and it will extend to the farthest borders of the country.

"If I were a Frenchman I should not feel secure until my country possessed absolutely overwhelming superiority in the air.

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" The power of destruction and the range of action of the aeroplane have undergone prodigious expansion since the war. Cities like Paris and Lyons now lie within an hour's flight of the frontier for the heaviest bombers.

" The latest German passenger-machines, such as the four-engined D2,000 type, have a carrying capacity of three tons. That means that ten such aeroplanes could drop on Paris in a single raid as great a weight of bombs as fell in the London area during the whole of the Great War.

" Reducing their load to two tons apiece, they could fly 1,000 miles out and home. The transports bringing troops from the French territories in North Africa would come within their raiding radius while still far out at sea. By air action alone the movements of French vessels in the Western Mediterranean might be rendered all but impossible.

" The pacifist Socialists of Marseilles, which is only 350 miles from the nearest point of the German frontier, would be as directly exposed to bombardment in any future war as the citizens of Arras or Le Cateau were in the last. Within three or four hours of the declaration of war this great city with her docks and shipping might be just as speedily and effectively destroyed as was the town of St. Pierre, Martinique, on May 8th 1902 through the eruption of Mont Pelee. The loss of civilian lives would be numbered by the hundred thousand.

" These are dangers against which the most formidable fortifications in the world give no more protection than a row of railings. Heavy guns, huge fleets of tanks, a whole nation in arms—all of these are powerless to ward off the all-pervading destruction that can come, swiftly and often unseen, by way of the air.

" Weapons and traditions handed down from the last campaign will prove a handicap rather than an advantage to the country that retains them. International conflicts of the future will be unlike those of the past by as much as the Great War differed from the combats of cave men.

" No nation that is not unchallengeably strong in aerial armaments can feel secure. Knowing that France is one of the mainstays of European peace, I should like to see

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her splendid aviation corps raised to the strength of 20,000 war-'planes, including both the fastest fighting and the heaviest bombing types.

"This could be done without any heavier burden of expenditure, for the possession of so powerful an Air Force would be in itself an almost complete guarantee of the integrity of French soil. The cost of national defence in both man-power and money can be greatly reduced by the large-scale use of aeroplanes. For frontier patrol work the aeroplane puts all other arms completely out of date.

"The keen foresight of the French General Staff has already assured to France a foremost position in the air among the nations of Europe. I trust that her position in this respect will be consolidated and improved. Complete mastery of the air in the hands of the French would establish European peace on a basis as stable as when Great Britain exercised supreme control of the sea."

This forecast of military events and relations had a striking confirmation nearly eighteen months later.

In the *Revue Hebdomadaire* of April 1935 appeared a remarkable article signed *XXX*. The anonymous author was understood to be a high General on the active list of the French army. There were suggestions that the work had been inspired by General Gamelin, the Chief of the General Staff.

So strongly did the warning of *XXX* appeal to me that I had translations of the article made and circulated to the leading British Ministers and certain high officials. This article immediately on publication was unquestionably communicated by the military attachés in Paris of the great military Powers to the General Staffs of Japan, Italy, Germany, Russia, Poland and the others. It was quoted in many newspapers throughout the world. But I realised that, under our haphazard Depart-

mental system, many of our important ministers might not have seen it.

I fully appreciated the purpose behind this article and its value, just as I recently appreciated the efforts of Captain Liddell Hart to arouse Britain to a real knowledge of her weakness in A.R.P. at the time of Munich. Only when experts speak out can the public know how to feel and act.

The article by *XXX* had world publicity. It was an event. But even while I stress its importance, I share fully the belief that when it was written France, with her magnificent General Staff, her thousands of well-trained officers, her great reserves of trained men, and her *cadres* ready for a war footing, had an advantage that could only be countered by several years of further preparation by Germany.

The article is far too long for me to reproduce here, but one or two passages from it will demonstrate how timely had been my own words to the French in 1933.

Here are some of the conclusions reached by this French General :—

> "Germany unquestionably is playing the card of France's weakness and lack of foresight. . . . We are 100 leagues behind the necessities of a colossal initiative. Our peaceful expectations keep us in as grave a state as we were before. Our war preparations and the organisation of the army are likely to be left in their essential details to the day that hostilities break out. . . .
>
> "The mortal danger is from the air. Aircraft will play the leading rôle in the drama, and the first act will be staged on the frontier. . . . Here is how I visualise the inevitable drama. On the very first night our Air Force, which is criminally concentrated in a dozen bases, will be wiped out, together with its sheds, its aeroplanes

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and its aerodromes. At the same time our covering forces between Sedan and Hunningue and between Verdun and Belfort will be crushed by explosions, fire and gas. . . . All our defensive systems will be rendered obsolete by a gigantic aerial neutralisation, and our covering forces will be swept away before an enemy wave which will be preceded by mechanised advanced guards moving at a speed of 100 kilometres a day. . . .

"The air menace comes before everything else. It comes first on account of the initiative that it gives to preparation as well as its execution. . . . All those who have not studied and meditated the integral problem in its dominant aspect—the primacy of the air—have forfeited all claims to govern or to command.

"Just as our military force must be prepared for instant use, so must we have an Air Force immediately ready to stop or to counterbalance an enemy air force."

This article, if anything, erred on the side of pessimism. It was used as a means of speaking over the heads of the politicians to the French people, and it was thus couched in more sombre terms, perhaps, than was fully justified. It was intended to ring through the country like a clarion call. In many ears it sounded so.

With such warnings being uttered, backed by a command of technical detail, France might well have stiffened to the menace. On the contrary, in June 1936 M. Leon Blum took office as Prime Minister, and France swung quickly to the Left. A swing to the Left always means an encouragement of laziness in the workers, combined with a policy designed to make them more bellicose towards the Right-wing Governments at their borders.

Part of the truth about the lack of energy in both Britain and France is that the two Governments were hypnotised into lassitude by the memory of Locarno.

The Locarno Pact, upon which great hopes were

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built, implied for its usefulness strongly armed Powers able to fill their pledges one to the other. But even had Britain and France been as strongly armed as Italy and Germany were to become, the Locarno Pact would still have been a snare.

This is not wisdom after the event. I recalled in May 1938 that :—

> " The day the Locarno Pact was signed I happened to be in New York. A well-known American asked me what I thought of that much-applauded diplomatic achievement. I replied, ' It *is* nothing, and it means nothing. You cannot heal the gaping wounds of Europe by an application of sticking-plaster.' When I was in New York a few weeks ago I was reminded by my American friend of my dictum on the Locarno Pact, and he congratulated me on the accuracy of my diagnosis."
>
> (*Daily Mail*, May 27th 1938.)

My attitude to that Pact was elaborated in an interview which I gave to the French Press when I happened to visit Paris on November 5th 1933 :—

> " My quarrel with the Locarno Pact," I then said, " is more than anything else because of its manifest unfairness.
>
> " It requires Britain to go to the aid of France and of Germany, but does not bind France or Germany to come to the aid of Britain. Moreover it is a dangerously drawn document, full of implied undertakings and capable of various interpretations. Instead of binding Britain to France, it might at any moment arouse extreme suspicion.
>
> " One or other country might suspect the good faith of the other, and, rather than its being an instrument of appeasement, it might easily become one of dangerous discord.
>
> " Before the end of this decade it is possible that war, largely confined to the air, and in which tens of thousands

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of war-'planes are engaged, might break out throughout Europe.

" It is to such a possible emergency that the minds of all leaders of public opinion should be turned.

" The peoples should be warned of the terrible dangers of a world war in the air.

" They should be reminded also that in future wars any ultimatum would probably be of only twelve hours' duration.

" Time is very pressing, and no more should be wasted by British delegates at Geneva. It is obvious now that any chance of reaching a disarmament agreement is practically impossible, and even if reached on paper it would be completely disregarded in practice.

" Therefore we should, however reluctantly, pursue immediately a policy of intensive aerial armament.

" Compared with the millions of combatants in the World War, the number of men engaged in aerial warfare on a vast scale would be relatively insignificant. A fleet of 10,000 bombing planes and 10,000 pursuit 'planes would require a fighting personnel of only 30,000 men.

" The economy in ammunition and shells would also be enormous when the vast number of shells that used to be fired a day on the Western Front in the last war is considered. Even to-day very few understand the potentialities of aerial warfare.

" I proclaim with complete certitude that the loss of life and damage caused by a fleet of 20,000 'planes would be infinitely greater than the casualties and damage suffered by France during the Great War.

" The loss of civilian life would be appalling, and huge cities would be transformed in a few hours into vast cemeteries.

" If within striking distance, a country with such an air fleet will be able to subjugate an insufficiently prepared enemy without moving one single soldier across its frontier.

" Great Britain exposes to air attack a far greater frontier than France on her eastern front or Germany on her western front. One may say that from Aberdeen to

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Dover there is to be found at distances of only a few miles apart great centres of population which could be destroyed by two or three bombing squadrons.

"So great is the speed of the latest war-'planes that even if their target is 300 miles away, they can attack, return, refill and attack again in the course of a few hours. Besides Paris, the industrial north of France and rich districts like that of Lyons would share in the tremendous dangers of modern aerial warfare. . . .

"I believe that no occasion of holding out a friendly hand to Germany should be lost. The present régime there is much to be admired. Sixty-seven million people have completely revolutionised their form of government with a minimum of hardship and oppression.

"There are said to be 50,000 German refugees to-day scattered throughout the world, but after the establishment of the Irish Free State Government the refugees from that country with its population of under 3,000,000 exceeded 100,000."

Britain and France were not the only people deceived by the false hopes of Locarno. Herr Hitler's predecessors in Germany also made the error of thinking that the gaping wounds of Europe could be healed with sticking-plaster.

My conviction that that famous Pact was to prove a futility, as it has done, did not mean that I considered that Britain could withdraw from all association with her European neighbours and embrace that complete isolation which is so attractive in theory and so impossible in practice.

My disappointment at the course which France took under M. Blum did not mean that I had turned 'anti-French.' Far from it.

In the very interview from which I have just quoted I said in this connection :—

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"No policy of isolation for Great Britain is possible. To-day its insular position renders it more exposed to aerial attack than a land Power. The interests of the two great Western European Powers, Great Britain and France, are one and indivisible. There should be a binding and strictly defensive alliance guaranteeing their European integrity. Britain and France swim or sink together. An independent France cannot live with a defeated Britain, and an independent Britain cannot live with a defeated France.

"Such a strictly defensive alliance would be in no way inimical to Germany, but it would exert a formidable influence for peace. It might easily provide a golden bridge for the settlement of outstanding territorial difficulties in Eastern and Central Europe, where adjustments are long overdue."

The defensive alliance that I had in mind when I gave that interview to the French Press could only endure on the understanding that France would not return to a semi-Communist policy which would prove provocative to her neighbours while at the same time causing strikes in her munition works.

It would be an entente for mutual defence, which should end if either party to it failed to do her share of providing adequate arms or embarked upon any policy that actively invited aggression from outside. The surest way to end such a valuable understanding would be for France to tolerate munition strikes as the complement of a provocative political policy.

This was the basis of my suggestion for a strictly defensive alliance.

Within the past half-year diplomatic events have begun to move in the direction which then, six years ago, I suggested as the only wise course.

H2075-0188

There, then, is my reply to the question " Are we then to desert our ally, France ? "

To the second question—" Are we to condone the aggressiveness of Japan by becoming attached to her through the Rome–Berlin–Tokio Axis ? "—my answer is equally direct. Despite the happenings in the Far East over the past year and a half, I still adhere to the beliefs expressed in an article which I wrote before the creation of the formal Rome–Berlin–Tokio Axis.

Our own history in China, for example, contains many examples of high-handed, arbitrary and even brutal action. In real life, and away from that wonderful dream-world in which so many of our sentimentalist politicians seem to live, every one of us has to tolerate in those with whom we must work certain actions and aspects of character which are far from ideal.

I stress this because, about Japan and Germany, strong emotional prejudice has shown itself capable of blinding sound mental judgement. The same thing was apparent in the last century with regard to Tzarist Russia and the France of Napoleon III.

My primary desire when writing of Japan in 1934 was to keep Britain out of a destructive war. That desire remains the motive behind all my efforts to warn my fellow-countrymen against those whom I consider to be false counsellors.

It will be seen that my forecast about Geneva and Japan was amply fulfilled both then and three years later.

This was the article :—

H2075-0189

I WANT FRIENDSHIP WITH JAPAN

" I want to say a few words of common sense before our excitable pacifists push this country into an embroilment with Japan.

" The position is that the League of Nations, embittered by Japan's rejection of its claim to meddle in her national affairs, would like to use the British Government as a cat's paw to pull its Far-Eastern chestnuts out of the fire.

" Many busybodies in this country, always anxious to poke their noses into matters that do not concern them, are aiding the League's efforts in this direction.

" But every sensible man and woman in Great Britain will say :

" ' Let the League's chestnuts burn ! They are no concern of ours.'

" This situation is reaching a critical stage. The League recently sent one of its meddlesome emissaries, a Pole named Dr. Rajchmann, to China to report on schemes of large-scale international interference in Chinese affairs. Besides the appointment by the League of a number of ' technical experts ' to various branches of the Chinese administration, Dr. Rajchmann advocates the creation of a finance corporation, with European backing, for the purpose of carrying out public works in China.

" Now, Japan last month made a public announcement that she would resent the intrusion of other nations into such matters.

" ' *The Unification and prosperity of China,' she said, ' must be attained by her own awakening, not by the selfish exploitation of other Powers.*' "

" Japan is perfectly entitled to take up this attitude, which corresponds to that of the United States in warning off the rest of the world, under the Monroe doctrine, from tampering with the concerns of South American States, and to that of Britain in reserving to herself a special position in Egypt.

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" But the officious intriguers of the League of Nations are clamouring for the Great Powers to ' put pressure ' on Japan.

" In plain language that means making war on Japan, and as Britain is the only country in the League of Nations which has a first-class Navy, it means that they want to use the British Fleet for this purpose.

" Such a prospect would doubtless horrify even those foolish sentimentalists who are responsible for its existence, but they are too short-sighted to see where their mischievous activities are leading.

" Our Government, moreover, has already displayed injudicious eagerness to act as an instrument of the League's policy of interference with Japan. A typical example is its fatuous imposition last year of an embargo on the shipment of arms to the Far East, which it had to take off almost immediately, since it found that though other Governments had expressed great enthusiasm for this idea, they did not follow its example, but allowed their subjects to sell arms freely both to Japan and China.

" Let us face facts.

" We cannot, even if we would, ' put pressure on Japan.'

" For plain reasons of geographical position, she is unchallengeable as the predominant Power in the Far East. She lies 10,000 miles by sea from Europe and 4,500 miles from the United States.

" Naval strategists have stated that to attack Japan with the slightest chance of success any other country would need a fleet three times the size of hers.

" If Britain undertook this mad enterprise she would at once lose Hong-Kong, and would soon be fighting desperately to keep Singapore and Ceylon, while Australia and New Zealand would have to be abandoned to their own inadequate defensive resources.

" The loss of prestige which these inevitable reverses would entail might easily cost us the whole of our trade east of Suez.

" Let us make no mistake about one thing—Japan cannot be bluffed.

" She will fight to the death in defence of her present policy, which is forced upon her by the density of her

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population—with less arable land per head than Britain—and by the poverty of her mineral resources, which, next to those of Italy, are the smallest of any first-class nation in the world.

"Why should we, or any other Western nation, or League of Nations, go to war with Japan to keep her out of China?

"The Japanese are barred from Australia, Canada and the United States. What right have we to try to bar them from extending their influence upon the Asiatic mainland, which lies only 120 miles from their shores, and with which they are connected by close ties of common race and culture?

"Admiral G. A. Ballard, late Director of the Operations Division of the Admiralty War Staff, who writes with personal knowledge of the Far East, put the case perfectly when he said:—

"'*The interests of the Japanese must, in common equity, be allowed to prevail in Eastern Asia, which is their own quarter of the earth's surface.*

"'*If the Japanese were a hopelessly incapable and retrograde people, obstructing the spread of civilisation, it might be otherwise, but they are not. Japan will doubtless exercise, in the course of time, a beneficial influence on the coasts of the North-West Pacific comparable to that exercised by Great Britain in India and France in Northern Africa.*

"'*Should commercial temptations prompt any other country to thwart Japanese aspirations in areas where the Japanese are more vitally concerned than anyone else, the sympathy of every right-minded man should lie with Japan.*'"

"If our Government were misguided enough to yield to the pressure of those visionaries who pursue the impracticable aims of the League, it would split the Empire. Australia will never consent to be drawn into a quarrel with Japan. She has a special emissary visiting Tokio on a 'mission of friendship' at this moment.

"Australia's relations with Japan are extremely profitable to her. She exports to that country four pounds' worth of goods for every pounds' worth that Japan sells to her. Canada is in a similar position.

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"Lord Cecil, a former British representative at Geneva, has said:—

"'*The League should tell Japan plainly that if she touches China, the League will proceed against her.*'

"I tell Lord Cecil plainly that the League cannot 'proceed against' Japan, and that the people of this country will never be such fools as to try to do so on the League's behalf.

"These war-mongering pacifists have found some unthinking support of late amongst British manufacturers who are feeling the heavy stress of Japanese competition.

"Grave though the loss of trade may be which this factor has entailed upon our exporters, they would be foolish to allow their political judgement to be warped by it.

"Japan still imports more from Britain and the British Empire than she exports to either. The balance of trade is in our favour.

"The fact that Japanese goods are under-selling ours in foreign markets is no reason for us to pick a dangerous quarrel with Japan.

"Her cheaper production is largely due to better industrial organisation and the simpler standard of living of her people. The Japanese are surely entitled to work hard and live simply if they like.

"The best remedy for the loss of our over-seas markets would be, not to fall out with Japan, but to reorganise our own industries and close India against all manufactured goods other than British. As Sir Walter Preston, M.P., chairman of the Lancashire textile machinery firm of Platt Brothers and Co., said at its general meeting and repeated in the House of Commons:

"'*Given up-to-date machinery, Lancashire can produce grey cloth and market it at a profit in India and China at prices lower than Japan is charging. . . .*

"'*If only the money can be found to enable Lancashire to re-equip its mills with the most modern kinds of machinery, such as have been supplied elsewhere, Lancashire can beat any one of its foreign rivals on price.*'

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"Japan is a natural friend of Britain.

"So long as she maintains the open door, it is no concern of ours what steps she takes to pacify and reorganise China.

"Let the League keep its officious hands off the Far East! Japan has much greater right to concern herself with Chinese affairs, and she cannot be expected to starve to death in her sterile islands to oblige the League of Nations.

"We British must take no part in the League's ill-omened plans for 'reconstructing China.' The basis of our foreign policy in the Far East can be stated in three words: Friendship with Japan."

(*Daily Mail*, May 23rd 1934.)

In writing thus of Japan, as in my warnings about Italy, I said hard things about the League of Nations. Our blind reliance upon the efficacy of that truncated and perverted instrument did more than anything else in our foreign policy to place us in our present jeopardy. My own doubts of it were early and strong, as I shall now endeavour to demonstrate, for the sake of the future as well as for the sake of having a clear record of the past.

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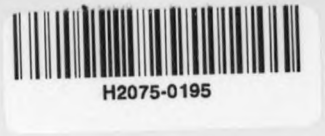
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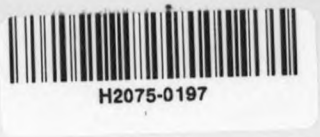
CHAPTER THIRTEEN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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MANY people in Britain seem to believe that a lack of trust in the League of Nations is some kind of moral delinquency.

These are usually the kind of people who, when you talk to them, are so politically ignorant that they confuse the League of Nations with the League of Nations Union.

If in business I bought a 'sprinkler' system as a protection against fire and when it was fitted I found it lacked several vital parts, I should not be expected, out of a sheer mystical regard for it, and a hatred of fires, to cancel my fire insurance and agitate for a disbanding of the Fire Brigade.

That is exactly the attitude taken by many of our Geneva fanatics to the League.

It was always doubtful if the League as it was conceived at Paris would do all that President Wilson and his admirers claimed for it. When that conception was ruined by the failure of President Wilson's own nation to participate in it, the chances of failure were obviously many.

When, after a time, the League, which for its effect depended upon being able to organise against any aggressor the combined forces of all the other nations, lacked not only the United States but two other great

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Powers, it was no longer the League of Nations at all. It was a League of some Nations, and those the weakest possible combination.

For many years I tried to warn Britain of the danger and futility of trusting to this broken instrument. Out of the innumerable leading articles which I had written to this end, perhaps the most blunt warning was one that appeared in 1935, which said :—

> ". . . the best course for Great Britain would be to keep right out of the meddlesome activities of the League of Nations and have as little as possible to do with that dangerous institution. By such a course this country could recover control of its foreign policy and would know exactly where it stands.
>
> " Geneva, far from justifying the hope that it would bring an era of peace and good-will, has proved to be just a booby trap, which involves Great Britain in every kind of disagreeable entanglement. The League's interference in important international affairs has so far been thoroughly detrimental to British interests.
>
> " In the Far East it came very near destroying the old feeling of mutual regard which existed between Britain and Japan. In Europe it has endangered our century-old friendship with Italy. At any moment it may create for us fresh antagonisms and difficulties.
>
> " Indeed, the news that the British Government had given in its resignation from the League would be received with general relief in this country and in the Dominions. There is nothing to be gained through the League for the cause of peace.
>
> " From the first its failure was predicted by such great authorities on foreign policy as the late Sir Eyre Crowe. As Hobbes said, centuries ago, ' Covenants without the sword are but words.' And, as yet, no one has been able to devise a safe or workable plan by which the League could be provided with a sword."
>
> (*Daily Mail*, July 13th 1935.)

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When that warning of the danger of trusting to the League was uttered, Italy's friendship had already been impaired. It need not have been. It could have been saved in the previous year, and the folly of the 1935 sanctions averted, had there been a clear-cut foreign policy.

The lack of such definition at the Foreign Office was, I am convinced, due to the primary weakness in our political system. The Ministry felt itself unable to pursue a strong line of policy because it feared the mass of voters who might, without adequate knowledge of the realities of international affairs, turn against it.

As Lord Baldwin admitted, when he was still Premier, it was necessary, perhaps, to deceive the electors in order to prevent the loss of a coming election.

If the electors were deceived about Britain's armed strength in relation to other countries, foreign policy had to align itself to that deception.

When Italy's attachment was still in the balance, I realised vividly how dangerous was the childlike faith which Britain seemed to be placing in Geneva. This was before the Sanctions drive.

The year following that criticism of the British reliance on the League, and the danger of driving Italy into the arms of the German *bloc*, the Sanctions policy was launched.

Just before the opening of the Italian campaign in Abyssinia I again stressed the danger of Geneva to British safety. I said of the League :—

> " Everyone is aware that the body is powerless to enforce its judgments. When Ministers tell us that they believe in the efficacy of the League in such matters (as Abyssinia) and in a mysterious something called ' collec-

tive security' they ought to remember that *in no case has the League ventured to apply its sanctions.* Mr. Lloyd George, indeed, declared last night that the resolutions passed at Geneva, excommunicating Germany in April, were 'humbug and hypocrisy.'

"The exaggerated emphasis laid upon the League's services cannot obscure the fact that its intervention involves the risk of general war and usually aggravates disputes. Thus the interference of the League encouraged the Chinese to resist Japan in 1932, just as it is encouraging Abyssinia's resistance to Italy to-day.

"Our participation in its proceedings is a ceaseless cause of international friction and ill-will. *In the case of Manchuria, it brought loss of British prestige in Eastern Asia; and in the case of Abyssinia, it is bringing loss of British prestige in Europe and Africa.*

"For all this there is very little gain to show. We cannot too strongly warn the Government against the risk of growing unpopularity which it will run if it allows the public to think that its policy is dictated by the League of Nations Union. The spurious pacifists of that organisation have done their best to disarm this country. They must never be allowed to force it into a war or into any course—such as the application of the League of Nations sanctions—which would certainly lead to war."

The prediction in that article that Geneva would cause loss of British prestige in Europe and Africa has been only too fully justified by events. The concluding sentence of the quotation—written, be it recalled, in July 1935—reads oddly like a forecast of Mr. Eden's own admission some two years later, when he said, as I have already quoted, "there are two possible forms of Sanctions—the ineffective which are not worth putting on, and the effective which means the risk, if not the certainty, of war."

I do not know how the Government of Switzerland regards the League of Nations, but many of the speeches

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made there, on Swiss soil, are unquestionably an infringement of the laws of neutrality. It would not surprise me to hear at any time that the Swiss Government had asked the League to conduct its mischievous work in some other country. Reports of recent sessions of the League prove beyond a doubt that this international collection of busybodies is conducting an agitation against Germany, Japan and Italy. It is an agitation which may well cause the Swiss Government the gravest concern.

One of the dangers of Geneva was a reflex of a danger inherent in any 'talking-house' system. A Minister, no matter what his country, who found himself in the middle of the Genevan spot-light, with all the world for audience, was tempted to try to cut a big and heroic figure.

Old-fashioned diplomacy, where responsible Ambassadors and Ministers met in private to discuss and settle awkward questions, held no such temptation.

Having asked for a clear-cut foreign policy, and then having seen British Ministers go to Geneva and utter the most bold statements of their intention that bore no resemblance to their power to act, I was forced back upon simple irony and satire to convey again the dangers of such a situation.

After a surfeit of posturings at Geneva I had published the following comment :—

> "The puzzle of British foreign policy is gradually being solved. Upon its underlying principles, hitherto obscure, events are casting light.
>
> "Experience proves it to be the rule of the present Government that bold words should always and automatically be followed by precipitate retreat.

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"When the newspaper organs of Government adulation refer impressively to 'Mr. Eden's stern warning' or 'the Foreign Secretary's strong speech,' it may be relied upon that retirement from the position thus assumed is imminent.

"Like Chinese soldiers of the mandarin days, the Government follows up an impressive display of fierce grimaces and fire-crackers by a rapid rearward movement.

"The speed with which Mr. Eden quits one position after another might have gained a gold medal at the Olympic Games, but it is not a quality that the British nation appreciates in the Minister who conducts its international relations.

"British trade is still suffering from his policy of sanctions, long after he abandoned it. His abject appeals for naval assistance to every small Mediterranean State that owned a few antiquated ships were dropped before they had achieved anything but the humiliation of British prestige. . . ."

(*Daily Mail*, September 2nd 1936.)

To phrase the matter another way, Geneva tempted British Ministers to 'over-call their paper.'

When I published the article from which I have just quoted, this danger had been fully demonstrated, but the country might have had the wisdom without the experience. Two years earlier I had emphasised that:—

"Nothing can obscure the fact that in view of our weakness in the air our present attitude in foreign affairs is at once foolish and provocative. While every Power in Europe except ourselves is straining every nerve to augment its air force, our Ministers remain apathetic and inert, blind to the risks they are running. . . .

"We cannot go on as we are going. Our foreign policy must be adjusted to our air strength. So far is this from being the case to-day that our delegates at Geneva are the most active speakers there, and might be described as always 'looking for trouble,' and making it. . . .

"Ministers must realise that foreign policy must be

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> determined by air strength. Otherwise humiliation or something infinitely worse lies ahead. No country is so exposed to air attack as this; no capital is so difficult of defence against air attack as London. The immunity which sea power gave us of old has vanished."
>
> (*Daily Mail*, September 18th 1934.)

One special weakness in the League which was revealed in 1935 had, as far as I know, occurred to none of the political and juridical theorists who devised the Covenant. It was this. A large nation involved in a dispute with a small nation found the League a bad tribunal for two reasons: first because the medley of small States that constituted the bulk of the League was necessarily prejudiced on the side of small States, as such, against big States, and, secondly, because a proud major Power did not relish having its conduct and affairs placed for judgement before such a medley of minor States.

Equally, that medley of small States was no guarantor of 'collective security' partly because their total force would not have frightened a well-armed or an economically strong nation, and partly because those small nations were not prepared to ruin their trade and risk the lives of their nationals in a quarrel with any such strong Power.

But for us, in Great Britain, the danger of the League was that it threatened to involve us in quarrels which were no concern of ours, and that it definitely took the control of our foreign policy and of our arms out of the hands of the British Government.

Ill received as were my convictions about the futility and menace of the League, they have since been shown to be sound. The abortive attempt to change Italy's

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course by the application of Sanctions has exploded for ever the myth of ' Collective Security.'

There was one other, and very serious aspect, of the League to which I early tried to draw attention. It was the threat which the League offered to our Imperial unity.

There can never be any doubt of the fervid patriotism of the Dominions. For the integrity of the Empire they would fight to the last coin and the last available man. But it is unwise to expect the British overseas to sacrifice themselves not for the Empire but for some sordid squabble between remote peoples in Central Europe.

What interest could the farmers and workers of Canada or Australia have in Italy's grievance against the maurauding tribesmen of Ethiopia? What interest could any of our Dominions have in Germany's grievance against Czecho-Slovakia for oppressing the German minorities?

Just before the crisis of 1938 I wrote frankly of this aspect of Geneva :—

> " I have never yet been able to understand how the League of Nations can unite on a policy of collective security, nor do I believe has anyone else. Collective security would, in fact, only function in Europe, for, outside Japan and the United States, it is only in Europe that there are any heavily armed Powers whom it might be necessary to bring to heel.
>
> " The Union of South Africa is a Member of the League of Nations. On my arrival in South Africa not very long ago the first newspaper I bought contained a speech by General Hertzog, the Premier of South Africa, saying that if war broke out in Europe, South Africa would immediately declare her neutrality.
>
> " This is a point of view which British advocates

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of collective security should never forget, for their policy might not only drag Britain into a disastrous war, but at the same time split the British Empire wide open."

(*Daily Mail*, June 3rd 1938.)

The speech of General Hertzog was delivered in 1934. On October 8th of that year I was in Durban, and from there wrote a letter to one of the leading members of the British Cabinet, in which I said :—

"You will remember telling me some time ago that you were apprehensive as to the feeling of South Africa in regard to Britain. From all I can learn there is an improvement. This is what South African journalists on the English papers here tell me, and they should be good judges.

"There would, however, I fear, be a radical change for the worse if Great Britain embarked upon a European war. If she does, it is assumed by some of the most knowledgeable journalists that Hertzog, within three days of this outbreak, would declare South Africa neutral.

"Such action would prove a great shock and would, I am sure, be used in England as an expression of moral condemnation of the war.

Four days later I was impelled to send a second letter to this correspondent of mine, saying :—

"Here is complete corroboration of what I told you is the opinion of English journalists on the English-language newspapers here. In the accompanying speech of Hertzog he, in so many words, states that South Africa will declare her neutrality on the outbreak of war.

"If we go to war it will come as a great shock to the British people to learn that they are deserted by the people of South Africa in the hour of peril. It would, however, be more disastrous because I believe it would definitely impair the spirit and vigour with which the war would be waged.

> "I urge you to put this view strongly before your colleagues before they definitely commit themselves to fight for Britain's frontier on the Rhine."

When those two confidential letters were written, and, indeed, when in June 1938 I repeated in a public print the gist of their warning, the suggestion that the Empire might be thus imperilled must in some minds have savoured of Imperial blasphemy. Since then we have had the Secretary of State for the Dominions telling a London audience of his own doubts about the continuance of the Empire, and we have had Mr. de Valera warning the Imperial Government that under certain circumstances the loyalty of Eire in another war must not be counted upon.

Had the earlier warning about our danger from 'The Geneva Trap' been heeded, Britain to-day would not have been in her present dire situation. The Axis would never have come into being. There would have been amity between the four Major Powers of Europe instead of a constant strain.

It is not for the melancholy satisfaction of recording this that I have reprinted those warnings and related the events which fulfilled them. It is that Britain may remember—and avoid in future the ghastly error she made in the past, of dreaming that a myth called 'Collective Security' can protect her should well armed and aggressive nations ever find reason to attack her.

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

In predicting the evils that would follow from Britain's policy of trusting to the myth of 'Collective Security' instead of to her own might, I was never under any illusion as to what were the practical implications of my warnings.

A nation is not safe merely because some bureaucratic Department has passed the blue-plans for defences. A nation is only safe when it has under its hands adequate weapons, adequately served with munitions, and the knowledge of how to use them.

To put it more bluntly—national safety demands a nation trained and disciplined, and ready to place the national need before all sectional interests of leisure or comfort.

In the summer of 1938 I published some comments on New Zealand. These I now rescue from 'the all-obliterating files' of a daily newspaper, partly for their own sake and partly for the sake of one terrible sentence.

I wrote :—

> "I am greatly struck by the news that New Zealand, with its population of some 1,600,000 people, has a new social scheme involving an additional cost of something like £10,000,000 a year, which will bring the New Zealand Budget to a total exceeding £40,000,000.
>
> "Her programme of defence is to cost something under £1,000,000.

"New Zealand is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world. Let anyone who doubts this take a map and examine the location of New Zealand in relation to Japan.

"New Zealand would be a tempting bait for Japan. It is thinly peopled with the very best and most gallant of British stock, and has an area and a climate eminently suited for large-scale Japanese immigration.

"Next year New Zealand may be spending 2½ per cent. of her national revenue on armaments. We shall be spending something like 40 per cent.

"When Japan has beaten China to her knees New Zealand may within the next ten years be in a position of extreme peril.

"A friend of mine is always telling me that a Parliamentary democracy cannot arm.[1] This is a terrible charge, because if it were largely true there would be no future for parliamentary democratic countries.

"New Zealand seems to corroborate his argument.

"Then again there is France, which is still armed almost entirely with the weapons of 1918.

"Until a few months ago the same charge could have been brought against our own parliamentary democracy."

Actually, that charge is still being levelled from many quarters at our own parliamentary democracy.

Although I am not prepared to give a full assent to the belief that a democracy cannot arm, I have always realised its peculiar disability. A warning against this very weakness which I published six years ago displays it well. It was this :—

A NATION OF ETHELREDS THE UNREADY

"The virtual failure of the Disarmament Conference confronts this country with a crisis.

[1] Mr. Collin Brooks, who since this was written has elaborated his point of view, with considerable courage, in his book *Can Chamberlain Save Britain?*

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"War in Europe is an imminent possibility. Other nations are ready for it. We are not.

"Our Air Force is not the strongest in the world—as it should be with our vast Imperial responsibilities—but the sixth. Half of its strength is 5,000 miles away in India, and could not get home across a Europe at war in time to defend this country.

"Our Army is smaller than in 1914, yet its full strength could not be mobilised so rapidly as then.

"The Royal Navy, twenty years ago the world's most powerful fleet, now takes second place. As a defence for these islands it has become far less formidable by reason of the gigantic development of the air fleets and submarine flotillas of foreign Powers.

"We are not ready.

"It is a grave defect of this nation that we are *never* ready for any international crisis, no matter how plainly its approach has been announced.

"For years my brother, the late Lord Northcliffe, published in *The Daily Mail*, and myself in other papers, convincing evidence of the inevitability of war with Germany. We were jeered at as scaremongers for our pains. And when war came Britain was not ready.

"The Cabinet was divided as to whether we should fight or not. The Army had two machine guns per battalion to the sixteen of German battalions. It was equipped with the wrong kind of shell. No preparations had been made to organise the nation's industries for the production of munitions on an adequate scale. No consideration had been given to the problem of compulsory service.

"Because we were not ready our victory cost us hundreds of thousands of lives and thousands of millions of pounds that we might have been spared.

"No nation in history ever paid so dearly for a lesson and failed to learn it as we have failed—for at the present moment, which may prove to be the eve of another Armageddon, we are not ready.

"This habit of living haphazard, through failure to look ahead, is a constitutional defect of the British character. It is the national disposition to be indolent

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and easy-going. Many of us, among whom I certainly include myself, are conscious of these inherited defects. They are responsible for our present perilous defensive position. For the first time in many generations Britain's freedom from invasion depends on the forbearance of her neighbours.

"I say emphatically that if immediate action is not taken to confront the ominous situation developing on the Continent we shall once more have to redeem this unreadiness at frightful cost. The Great Air War is not far off.

"Every schoolboy has read the story of Ethelred the Unready, the Saxon King who threw away the throne of England by his ineffective policy of paying Danegeld. I wonder if our politicians ever study it. Did they but turn to the Dictionary of National Biography they would find a description of Ethelred which might be a portrait of many of ourselves. He is described as "good-looking and of graceful manners," and his character is summed up in these words :—

"'*He was by no means deficient in ability, but had no principles of action and was guided by motives of temporary expediency.*'

"This well-meaning but weak-willed ruler tried to buy his way out of the predicaments in which his lack of preparation landed him. Obvious though the danger of Danish invasion was, he never braced himself to meet it, but six times during his reign of thirty-seven years bought off the constantly returning invaders with bribes that steadily increased until their total represented what in present currency would be a stupendous sum. This was the first tax ever imposed on England in money, and had to be raised from a plundered and exhausted population of about one million people.

"Ethelred's only act of vigour was the treacherous massacre of all the Danes in England which he organised on November 13, A.D. 1002. His ineffective rulership resulted in the domination of this country for 200 years by foreign kings. As Hodgkin says in his *Political History of England* :—

H2075-0213

" ' *He systematically left undone the things which he ought to have done, and did, with fitful and foolish energy, the things which he ought not to have done.*'

" That is posterity's verdict on one of the most pitifully ineffective figures of our country's past.

" No impartial observer can deny that the defects which betrayed England to her conquerors 900 years ago are again manifest in our midst to-day. The British nation has been dreaming peace and disarmament when the rumblings of approaching war and the clang of restless rearmament are all around us.

" Marshall Petain, the French War Minister, last week told the Chamber of Deputies in Paris that Germany is now re-armed up to pre-war military strength, and could mobilise an army of 1,600,000 men within a week. He declared, with all the authority of one of the supreme Allied commanders in the Great War, that Britain and France were particularly in danger. Yet such is the apathy of our people, as well as its political chiefs, that hardly any newspaper except *The Daily Mail* regarded this momentous statement as worthy of any prominence.

" Grim as this prospect is, its reality will be far grimmer if we do not prepare to meet it. No nation has ever escaped the penalty of unreadiness, though many have been warned of its dangers. Ollivier, who was at the head of the French Government when France took her fatal plunge into war with Prussia, said of the activities of his master, the Emperor Napoleon III :—

" ' *This obstinacy in pursuing chimaeras, in refusing to see facts, in wasting days on useless blackening of paper, in importuning Cabinets with infantile insistence, does not enhance the diplomatic authority of a Government.*'

" Just as our Ministers boast that we have ' disarmed to the edge of risk,' so in 1867, three years before the crushing defeat of France, French politicians were clamouring for the disarmament of their own country ' in order to set an example.'

" Let us not delude ourselves with the belief that fate will be more indulgent to Britain than she has been to

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other nations in the world's history. As Bismarck said in 1868 after annexing Hanover to Prussia :—

> " ' *A bad organisation of National Defence carries in itself a sure punishment. Hanover has lost her independence through neglecting her defences. The same fate awaits all States which neglect their defences. That is the way they have to pay for it.*'
>
> " The Government has a plain duty to this country. It must give us, without delay and at no matter what cost, an Air Force fully equal to the strongest existing in Europe.
>
> " That is the very minimum which will ensure reasonable safety for Great Britain. If we fail to put this measure into execution, the evil they bring upon their country and the ignominy they bring upon themselves will both outlast those that are still attached to the name of their Saxon prototype."
>
> (*Daily Mail*, June 13th 1934.)

Everything that has happened since that article was published has confirmed the sentence—" It is a grave defect of this nation that we are never ready for any international crisis, no matter how plainly its approach has been announced."

One of the reasons for this unreadiness is undoubtedly the reliance we place upon talk. It is not only that the whole of our electoral machine is motivated by talk—but Parliament itself and the Cabinet which arrange the Parliamentary programme are not acting machines, but talking machines. As I wrote in 1935 :—

> " For four years the British National Government has been challenging air-power with lung-power. Throughout the country a great number of sentimentalists, screaming and shouting at the tops of their voices, seem to have been deluded into the belief that this vocal exercise is some kind of substitute for armament. In other words, they

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have assumed that lung-power is a substitute for armed force."

In foreign affairs, strident rebukes and long questionnaires have been directed at other Powers, as if such words had some magic in them which would not only cause compliance, but reduce the recipients to impotency.

The reverse we know to be the case. These floods of words have not, over the past half decade, caused those to whom they were directed to comply with Britain's will. They have merely caused Britain to be despised. Even General Franco, to whom Britain refused belligerent rights as the head merely of a body of insurgents, and who, as I from the first predicted in the *Daily Mail*, has won the Spanish war, followed the example of great Powers like Germany and Japan and treated British words—as words.

Whether we like it or not, the question does emerge, and is now being asked with greater and greater frequency from more and more lips. Can a democracy which places a high value on talk and a low value on effort and action possibly hope to compete with nations directed to intense and incessant effort by men of action? Under a democratic system those in power depend upon the suffrages of great masses of men and women. Masses of men and women can be swayed by rhetorical appeals to their emotions. Rhetoric can show a gang of terrorists like the terrorists of Barcelona as a devoted body of democrats fighting for liberty or a race of slave-hunting barbarians as a nation of enlightened apostles of freedom. These strange transformations have actually been wrought on the Reds of Spain and the tribesmen of Ethiopia. Similar rhetorical feats can transform a desperate call to

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national defence into a bankers' ramp or a capitalists' trick. How, then, can an electorate so bemused be expected to judge rightly in its own affairs and devote itself to its own preservation with the necessary energy?

I have already cited the disproportion between the defence allocation in the New Zealand Budget and the allocation for social services. What would be the fate of any British Government which went to the polls demanding support for a policy that necessitated the severe cutting down of our own social services?

That is one aspect. The other is more technical. If under a democratic system the standard of social services has to be rigidly maintained and yet great bills have to be met for armaments and for the keeping and training of men to use them, taxation must rise. If taxation rises, industry is hit, because its costs go up in relation to the costs of foreign competitors. That means new unemployment, which means more payments out of the Exchequer—and so the vicious circle is set whirling.

Many times ingenuous people have asked me, "But if a poor country like Germany can arm, why can't a rich country like Britain beat her at the game?"

The short answer to this question is that it is playing with words. Germany is not a poor country. As a nation she is, for example, very rich in agricultural and forest lands, rich in arms and trained citizens. Nor is Britain in every sense a rich country. She is only 'rich' while her reserves of wealth last and her trade goes on.

If the world knows that Britain is weak, and may not be enabled to defend herself when attacked, British trade

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will suffer and that complex financial machine which we call ' the City of London ' will be impaired if not brought to a standstill. We saw those things happening in 1931, when confidence in Britain suffered a setback.

The other answer to the question is that even a rich nation cannot hope to rival a poor nation if its people only work a percentage of the hours of the poor nation and will not give their leisure to training.

Freedom and liberty are great attainments, but dangerous words.

There are two liberties. There is the liberty for which our platform demagogues shriek—the liberty of the subject to order his life as selfishly and as suicidally as he pleases. There is the liberty which the Totalitarian States have striven to attain—the liberty of the State to be free from any danger of aggression or defeat.

Without this second liberty, the first is useless. It is that fools' paradise which is the anteroom to a fools' hell.

When in Germany the people were given their choice of guns or butter, the English demagogues found much food for ridicule and pity in the phrase.

Under our haphazard, muddled, inert democratic system we may soon not even have that choice. Our choice may well be between guns and margarine!

Out of every £ which he earns the ordinary income tax-payer to-day is allowed to keep 14*s.* 6*d.*, out of which he has to pay all his indirect taxes and local rates before he has a penny for himself. The very rich are allowed to keep only 6*s.* 3*d.* for those purposes. Classes below the income-tax level, who pay compounded rates through their rent-books and indirect taxes only, have I know not

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what proportion of their wages left for their own needs. In the future they may find that they cannot indulge in much butter or margarine.

And they may still lack the guns!

Repellent as it may be to the British temperament and the tradition of centuries, the thought must certainly be now in everybody's mind whether or not adequate armaments can be procured and adequate man-power trained for defence without some measure of compulsion.

After twenty years of screaming about Liberty, is it not time that the sentimental quasi-pacifists began to talk about Duty?

I stand by my warning of four years ago. In the present state of world politics it will be fatal for British liberty if we continue to rely upon lung-power instead of air-power. I return again to the pregnant words of Bismarck. *A bad organisation for national defence carries in itself a sure punishment. Loss of independence is the way that States pay for such neglect.*

Can a democracy which prohibits those in command from directing the individual citizen to the work it is needful for him to do ever hope for anything other than a bad organisation for national defence?

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

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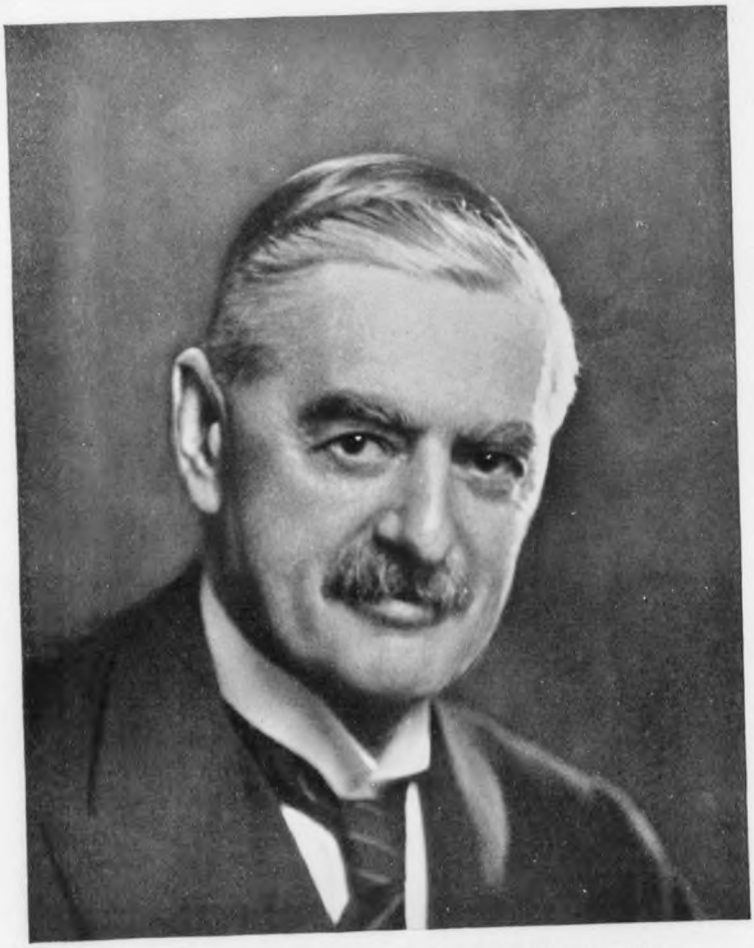

THE RT. HON. NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN, P.C.

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE reign of realism in British foreign policy began with the advent to the Premiership of Mr. Neville Chamberlain.

It was he who, beyond all doubt, saved Europe from a devastating war in September 1938. His policy of appeasement reversed the trend of British diplomacy which was driving towards a clash with the armed and resolute Totalitarian States, the mutual destructiveness of which imagination cannot measure.

Mr. Chamberlain is a man of great discernment. Although foreign affairs had not been his major study throughout his early political career, he brought to them that agate mind and unassuming courage which he had displayed in the years when he was concerned with the complex problems of a great and developing city and the later years when he was handing in a most difficult period the finances of the nation.

He was the first among his colleagues to denounce the midsummer madness of continuing Sanctions against Italy. He sought from the first a new and closer intercourse with the leaders of the Totalitarian States, so that he and they might the better understand each other.

We have had sufficient testimony of how highly both those leaders and their people have appreciated his sincere personality. His three visits to Germany and his recent visit to Rome drew such a spontaneity of

welcome that in the mind of Europe he has become the very symbol of the pacificator.

Great Britain and the Empire are fortunate in having a statesman with his peculiar insight, his imperturbable calm and his quiet courage.

He is a man not to be " rattled." Neither the grim pressure of events nor the irresponsible criticism of ill-informed opponents has shaken, or can shake, his clear-minded determination. He knows the value of patience, and can smile when it is miscalled weakness. He knows the value of action, and—as the flights to Berchtesgarten and the recent new appointments to his Cabinet and staffs have shown—can take action without fuss.

He has always been frank about the aim of his policy. It is peace. He has always been equally frank that the pursuit of peace does not mean the abandonment of anything which truly affects Britain's interests or honour. But he will not for some ideology or from want of effort plunge into destruction the carefully built civilisation which we have inherited from generations of our ancestors, he will not throw back to chaos the painfully constructed economic fabric of Europe, he will not give to the death and mutilation of air warfare the helpless millions of his own and other countries.

His effort is to understand the grievances of Europe and to attempt to redress them. His strength is that in this effort he is able to see clearly and without illusion what the international situation *really* is.

This clarity of political vision would be of the greatest value in any statesman. In Mr. Chamberlain it is allied to qualities and faculties which, through long years of practical business experience, have been trained to the

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work of getting results without delay. That very lack of flamboyancy which to some eyes conceals his true greatness as the executive head of the State, is itself a valuable asset to the nation. It prevents his necessary actions from seeming provocative and theatrical. It impresses those about him, and those with whom he has dealings, with a sense of his sincerity that no amount of verbal protestations could create.

Mr. Chamberlain's tasks and responsibilities are greater than any that have rested upon his predecessors. For their achievement and endurance he is wonderfully equipped. But he needs the united support of the people behind him, and he deserves that support.

To complete the re-armament of Britain after the long years of neglect, and the recent years of laggard and tardy experimentation, and at the same time to anneal the wounds left by the last war and the twenty years' aftermath—those are the two phases of his work. A strong Britain anxious that the peace of the world shall not be broken—that is the end to which his work is directed.

I say again, with all the emphasis that I can command, that we are fortunate to have a man of his mould and his character to carry the burden. The skirmishing Parliamentarians and the critics of Press and platform who for party or sectional reasons endeavour to harass and distract him do their country an ill service, or would do so were the Prime Minister and the public at large not at one in their realisation of the fact that at this time national unity is essential to national survival.

Mr. Chamberlain's policy is to keep the peace of the world. Peace may not always be in his keeping. If

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ever the evil day should dawn when peace is again shattered, the nation he leads, as any aggressor would quickly discover, is not without certain advantages. In preparing the British people against any such catastrophe Mr. Chamberlain knows well what these are.

The world would do well to examine them.

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

WHAT are Great Britain's advantages ?

They are the basis for the real answer to the questions that we have been compelled, as a nation, to ask ourselves.

As I wrote six years ago, it is beyond question that the young Britisher makes the finest air pilot in the world.

Of this, I have no doubt. I have talked with pilots and air experts of all nations of the world. There is among them a consensus of opinion that it is the Britisher who has the essential qualities of the airman.

This may well come from long generations of maritime experience. There is, after all, some resemblance in the calls upon capacity and character made by the navigation of the air and the navigation of far seas.

The possession of this aptitude for the dominant arm of modern defence is of inestimable advantage.

The British are still unequalled on the sea. A mastery of nautical skill is not easily lost, even when a nation has grown persistently more urban with the passage of years. The Navy, the merchant service, the fishing fleets are still the nurseries of the best seamen in the world.

Britain has never boasted herself a military nation, but her military record is second to none.

It is within living memory what we did in the war of

1914–1918. There were no sturdier troops anywhere than those of the Empire, whether they came from the pits and factories of Northern England, the fields of our rural counties or from the Britains-over-the-Seas.

No nation in the world has a record of conducting war as our Napoleonic wars of twenty years duration were conducted, with dogged persistence and unfailing courage to ultimate and complete victory. I am sure that no other country, and no other people, has shown in such a high degree the qualities of our nation between the years 1795 and 1815.

These things are not matters of prowess only; they bespeak a true and real patriotism. In self-sacrificing and courageous love of country, the Britisher stands foremost. Our whole history proves it.

Equally does our industrial record demonstrate the same capacity and the same high standards of honour. British workmanship in industry has always led the world, both for skill and quality. It is as finished and thorough to-day as ever it was.

Commercially, despite setbacks due to political and other causes, the British are still the leaders of the world. An Englishman's word through the remoter countries acts as a talisman in all business transactions. It is a tremendous tribute to the real trust placed by others in our national qualities.

In emphasising this aspect of Britain's standing in the world I am not, by comparison, detracting from the same qualities of commercial and national honour and probity in other nations. I am simply stating a world-acknowledged fact that the British through generations of trade and commerce have gained this high reputation.

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Surely out of the compound of all these qualities as we have displayed them in the air, on the sea, and on the land, in arms and arts and trade, we can to-day fashion a nation secure from military attack and prepared for economic advance.

We do not lack patriotism, or initiative, or dogged industry. By getting together and applying our advantages of experience and qualities we can build a rampart that will withstand all that may be hurled at it in any future trial of strength, if such a trial there must be.

But—as I have said—I cannot see how this can be achieved without some measure of agreed compulsion. We force parents to send their children to schools at the public cost, but in regard to a much more vital matter we hesitate to apply compulsion to willing citizens in their own defence.

In manning the country in its defence we cannot rely upon a million scattered efforts or casual attempts to co-ordinate the efforts of small communities. The people need direction. They wish to be told what is expected of them and they will do it.

There is one other advantage enjoyed by Britain as a European Power. I have never concealed from German, and other, interlocutors my belief that any attack on Great Britain will rally to her support all the English-speaking peoples in a war without an end. This view I have expressed both in writing and by word of mouth in such ways that it would reach the highest quarters in Germany.

The Totalitarian States have one advantage. They have mobilised all the political resources of their people under one control, so as to be able to wage war

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or pursue prosperity with every predictable chance of success.

With them there is no division of opinion about what ought to be done; there is no stinting of energy when the task is known. There is no delay in beginning, continuing or finishing the work.

In the modern world, time is vitally important. We cannot afford delay. Without a strong central control delay is inevitable, as the pages of this book have shown.

With adequate resources of material and money, with men and women of the finest fibre in the world adapted by heredity to the very activities which will be the major uses of a modern war, with an Empire knit by a traditional patriotism to the British ideal of Government, we can be again the most formidable people in the world —so strong that none dare attack us.

From past perils must come a new resolution. With Britain aware of her need and directed in her task by Prime Ministers of the calibre of Mr. Neville Chamberlain, all warnings of disaster will be falsified.

The British Empire will be a friend to be sought and a foe to be feared.

Then can be made again with the old confidence the prediction, used by Mr. Chamberlain—

> . . . come the three corners of the world in arms,
> And we shall shock them.

But against a Britain so organised and prepared no one in arms will dare to come.

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Ri.Exhibit Nr. 45

H2075-0235

Auszuege aus dem Buch

"W a r n i n g s a n d P r e d i c t i o n s"

von Viscount Rothermere

Seite 137, letzter Absatz

Einen Staat oder eine Nation Tschechoslowakei hat es nie gegeben, wohl aber hatte im Mittelalter ein Koenigreich Boehmen bestanden, dessen Unabhaengigkeit 162o ihr Ende fand. ... Die Grenzen dieses Staates wiesen jedoch keine Aehnlichkeit mit der Nachkriegsbildung der Tschechoslowakei auf.

x x x

Seite 15o, 3.Absatz

"Die Tschechen waren vor und waehrend des Krieges eines der Voelker, die dem oesterreichisch=ungarischen Reich unterstanden. Nur der Umstand, dass die tschechischen Soldaten in besonders grosser Zahl desertierten, ermoeglichte es ueberruehrigen Tschechenfreunden in England und Amerika, sie als ein unterdruecktes Volk hinzustellen, das ein Anrecht auf Nachsicht und Anerkennung von den Verbuendeten habe.

x x x

Seite 138, 1.Absatz

"Die Verbindung der Tschechen mit den Slowaken war lediglich das Ergebnis einer waehrend des Krieges in Pittsburg abgehaltenen Konferenz; auf dieser erklaerten sich die Slowaken zur Unterstuetzung der tschechischen Forderungen bereit, wenn eine Friedenskonferenz zusammentreten sollte; zuvor war ihnen autonome Selbstverwaltung fuer ihr Volk in jedem zukuenftigen tschechoslowakischen Staate, wie er auch gebildet wuerde, verbuergt worden. ...

x x x

INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL
NURNBERG, GERMANY
Ri Exhibit 45
March 27 Filed 1946

Seite 151, 1.Absatz

"Als das Dokument der Friedenskonferenz vorgelegt wurde, fiel es niemandem ein, darauf hinzuweisen, dass die damit einverstandenen Tschechen und Slowaken alle amerikanische Buerger und als solche schwerlich berechtigt waren, ueber das Schicksal Mitteleuropas zu entscheiden. ...

x x x

Seite 151, 2.Absatz

"Aber Tschechen und Slowaken zusammen zaehlten nur 8 1/2 Millionen. Daher behaupteten die tschechischen Fuehrer mit allerlei Scheingruenden, deren Widerlegung die Friedensdelegierten bei der Eile, die sie hatten, nicht zulassen wollten, einen weiteren Anspruch auf die Annektierung grosser geschlossener Voelkermassen voellig verschiedener Rasse zu haben.

x x x

Seite 138, 2.Absatz

"Um Gebiet fuer diesen Mischstaat zu finden, mussten die Friedensdelegierten in Paris zu Hilfsmitteln greifen, die im direkten Gegensatz zu dem oeffentlich verkuendeten Grundsatz der Selbstbestimmung standen. Nicht nur wurden 3 ooo ooo Deutsch=Oesterreicher darin eingegliedert, sondern die Grenzen dieses Gebietes wurden nach Sueden hin auch durch die Einbeziehung einer geschlossenen Menge von einer Million Ungarn erweitert, deren Rasse und Sprache von der der Tschechen voellig verschieden waren. Diese Leute und die ungarische Abordnung auf der Friedenskonferenz protestierten lebhaft, aber vergeblich gegen ihr Schicksal. ...

x x x

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Seite 151, 4.Absatz

"Diese beiden geschlossenen Schichten von Auslaendern werden seitdem in der Tschechoslowakei als Gefangene gehalten. Sie wurden den Tschechen mit nicht mehr Ueberlegung ausgeliefert, als wenn sie Vieh seien, und werden von den tschechischen Behoerden auch nicht mit mehr Schonung ihrer Rechte und Gefuehle behandelt.

Seite 151/152, letzter Absatz

"Als Gefangene eines wegen seiner kleinlichen Niedertraechtigkeit beruechtigten Volkes sind sie der kaltbluetigsten Enteignung und Bedrueckung unterworfen. Man hat kein Bemuehen unterlassen, ihre Sprachen auszumerzen, und die tschechische Polizei hat versucht, die Leute durch staendige Verfolgung seelisch zu brechen.

x x x

Auf
Seite 161/162 bringt Rothermere ein Zitat Lloyd Georges aus The Truth About the Peace Treaties, Band II.

"Am 5.Februar 1919 forderte die Friedenskonferenz Dr. Benesch, den Ministerpraesidenten des neuen tschechoslowakischen Staates auf, ihr seinen Fall vorzutragen. Er schilderte ihn sehr geschickt und verschlagen. Die Tatsache, dass er die Eingliederung von Voelkern in die Tschechoslowakei forderte, die nach dem Grundsatz der Selbstbestimmung fuer andere Staaten gestimmt haetten, ueberging oder bagatellisierte er. Er floss ueber von Beteuerungen der Maessigung, Bescheidenheit und Zurueckhaltung in den Forderungen, die er fuer die neue Republik stellte. Seine ganze Rede spickte er mit Phrasen, die von Sympathiekundgebungen fuer die gepriesenen Ideale trieften, die Amerika und die Ver=

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buendeten auf ihrem Kreuzzug fuer internationales Recht ver=kuendeten."

So entstand die Tschechoslowakei.

x x x

Und noch ein Zitat aus Rothermere

Seite 14o, 2.Absatz

"Die Lage dieser Nachkriegsrepublik ist keineswegs sicher. In Privatangelegenheiten stehen sich die gemischten Elemente, aus denen sie zusammengesetzt ist = Tschechen, Slowaken, Ungarn, Deutsche, Morawier, Polen und Ruthenen = so feindlich gegenueber, dass das Verschwinden des Staates durch eine ploetz=liche Aufloesung von innen heraus jederzeit moeglich ist. In diesem Sinne bildet **er das Pulverfass Europas.** ...

Seite 14o, 3.Absatz

"Eins ist sicher = die Tschechoslowakei kann die gegenwaer=tige Ausbeutung der ihr unterworfenen Bevoelkerungen, ob sie ungarischer, deutsch=oesterreichischer oder einer der anderen Nationalitaeten sind, nicht fortsetzen. ...

x x x

Seite 144

Am 26. Maerz 1929 wurde ich gebeten, an einer Diskussion teil=zunehmen, die The Daily News and Westminster Gazette (Die Taeg=liche Nachrichten und Westminster=Zeitung) ueber den "naechsten Krieg" veranstaltet. Mein Beitrag enthielt die nachstehende Stelle, die die Ereignisse des Maerz 1938 genau voraussagte:

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H2075-0239

Seite 144, letzter Absatz

"Kein Mensch mit offenen Augen kann heute durch Mitteleuropa reisen oder auch nur seine zerrissenen politischen Teilgebiete auf der Landkarte studieren, ohne die Unbesonnenheit zu erkennen, mit der wirkliche und lebenswichtige Interessen hier mit Fuessen getreten wurden, als man jene willkuerliche und toerichte Neuver=teilung des Gebietes vornahm.

Seite 145, 1.Absatz

"Alle natuerlichen Grundsaetze einer Grenzziehung wurden ver=worfen. Die neuen Grenzen hatten keine Berechtigung weder ethno=graphisch noch geographisch oder wirtschaftlich. Sie schufen in Mitteleuropa einen Dauerzustand von Unbehagen, Reibung und Unzu=friedenheit, der, wenn er nicht beseitigt wird, unvermeidlich zu einem neuen Kriege fuehren muss."

x x x

Seite 157

"Ich kann mir nicht auch nur einen Augenblick vorstellen, dass Grossbritannien etwa zwanzig Jahre lang ruhig zugesehen haette, waehrend drei und eine halbe Million Briten an den Grenzen Englands unter der Knute eines durch und durch verabscheuten Volkes lebten, das eine fremde Sprache spricht und eine voellig verschiedene nationale Weltanschauung hat. Soweit ich meine Landsleute kenne, waeren sie sehr wenige Jahre nach einer solchen Vergewaltigung energisch eingeschritten."

x x x

Die Richtigkeit der Abschrift
bestaetigt:

Dr. H o r n
Rechtsanwalt

Filed March 27, 1946
A. B. Wilby
Secy

H-2075

Ri-Exhibit Nr. 45

Dokumentenbuch Seite

Dokumente Joachim von R i b b e n t r o p

Ribbentrop 45

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Ribbentrop 45

See also Pigeon Hole 3-D

"Book - "Warnings and Predictions"